MAKE LUSCIOUS HOMEMADE ICE CREAM

SAVEUR

Savor a World of Authentic Cuisine

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Why We Love

Pesto

The ideal summer sauce for tossing with pasta, topping crostini, or seasoning grilled chicken

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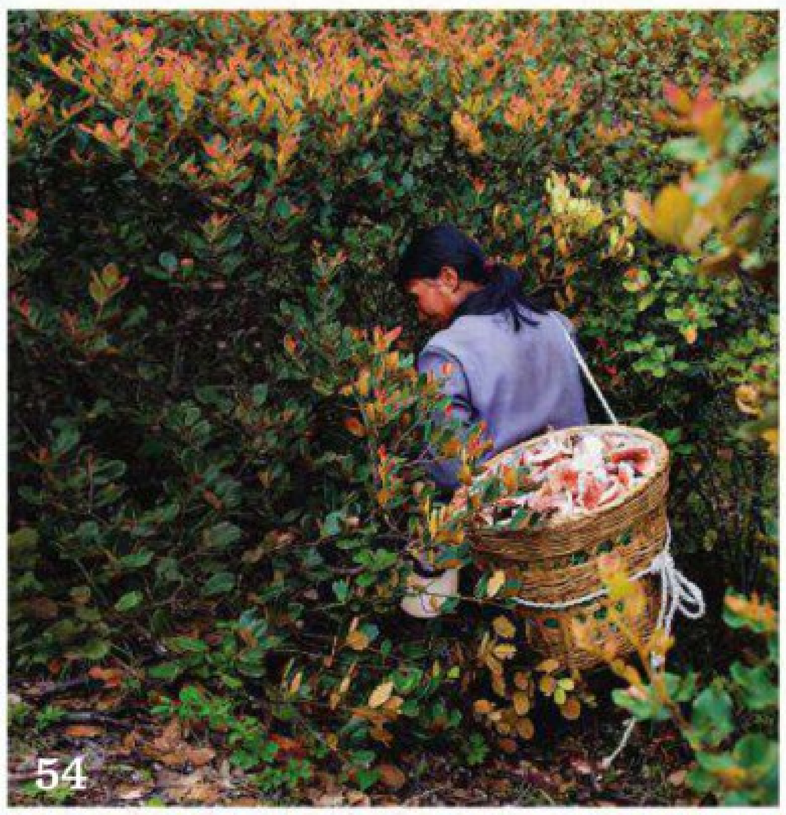
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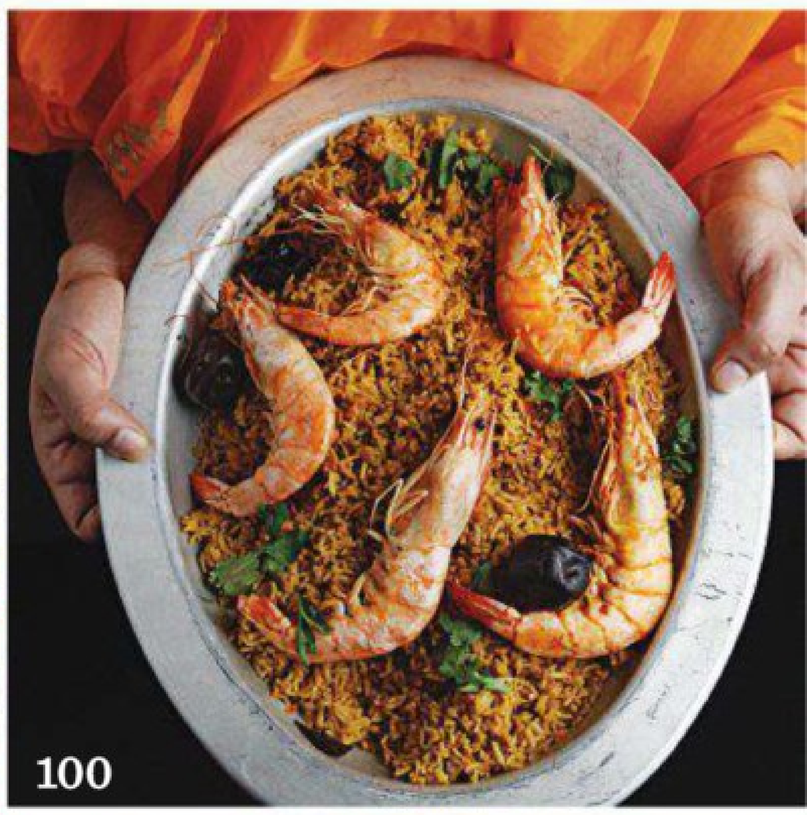
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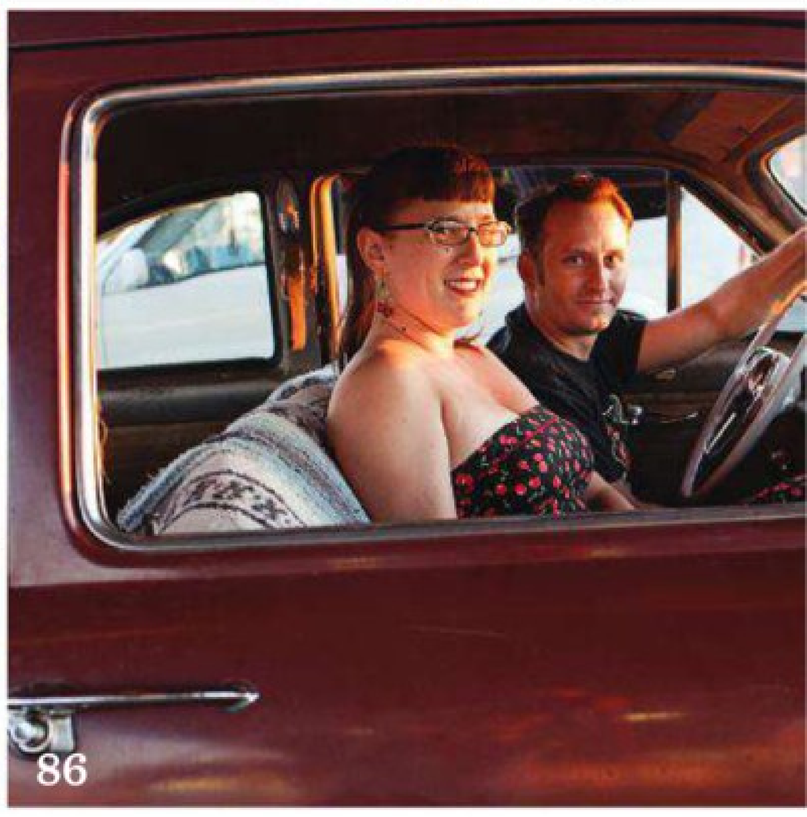

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A visit to China's Yunnan Province—the center of a flourishing mushroom trade, where more than 800 varieties grow—reveals an eclectic fungi-centric cuisine. Hearty dishes such as mushroom salad with chiles and clay-pot chicken with chanterelles showcase the diversity of these foraged foods. *By Beth Kracklauer*

68 Glorious Pesto
A simple yet magical mixture of basil, garlic, nuts, olive oil, salt, and cheese, pesto has seduced home cooks the world over. The author returns to her ancestral Liguria to discover the sauce in its most classic form, pounded with a mortar and pestle. Plus, 20 recipes for pesto's delicious variations, for dressing summer pastas, meats, fish, and more. *By Laura Schenone*

86 Valley of Abundance
With its miles of vineyards, orchards, cattle ranches, nut groves, dairies, and fertile fields, California's prolific Central Valley feeds America. A road trip through this cornucopia celebrates a unique place where commodity and boutique farms, American and immigrant cuisines, intersect. *By Gerald Haslam*

100 Breaking the Fast
During the month-long observance of Ramadan in the United Arab Emirates, the daily fast is broken with the best of the country's foods. Festive dishes, from fragrant shrimp biryani to creamy pumpkin halvah to vegetable-studded lamb stew, honor community and Islam's holiest days. *By Anissa Helou*

Cover *Pesto-rubbed chicken with panzanella* PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD COLEMAN

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HÄAGEN-DAZS Rum Raisin Ice Cream Monte Cristo With Taleggio Cheese And Prosciutto



FOR SUMMER, we love this take on the classic Monte Cristo sandwich—a salty and sweet combination of charcuterie, artisan cheese and our own hand-crafted Rum Raisin ice cream—an ingredient and a garnish. Serve with a side of sweet preserves, and you're in **HÄAGEN-DAZS** ice cream bliss.

SERVES 4

- 8 slices country white bread, ½-inch thick
- 4 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 4 Tbsp. fig jam or apricot preserves
- 4 oz. prosciutto, thinly sliced
- 4 oz. Taleggio cheese, sliced
- 2 eggs
- 2 pints **HÄAGEN-DAZS** Rum Raisin ice cream (1 pint melted)
- 8 Tbsp. butter

1. Set 1 pint of **HÄAGEN-DAZS** Rum Raisin ice cream out to melt.
2. Spread 1 tablespoon of fig jam on one slice of bread, then top it with two slices of prosciutto and 1 ounce of Taleggio cheese. Top the sandwich with a second slice of bread, spread with Dijon mustard. Repeat for three more sandwiches.
3. Mix 2 eggs and the melted **HÄAGEN-DAZS** Rum Raisin ice cream in a bowl. One at a time, dip the sandwiches in the batter, making sure to soak the bread completely. Heat butter over medium high heat on a griddle or large skillet. Fry the sandwiches on both sides until golden brown and the cheese has melted.
4. Garnish sandwiches with 1 scoop of **HÄAGEN-DAZS** Rum Raisin ice cream.

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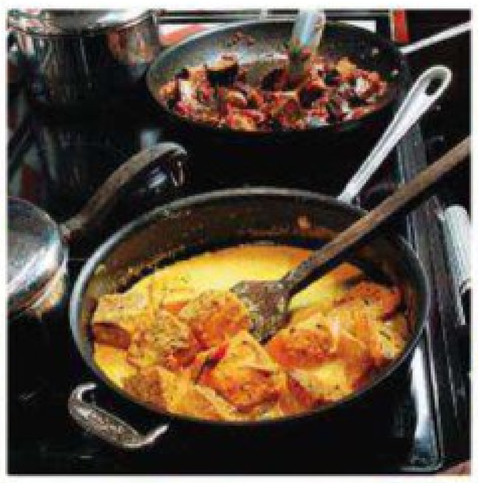




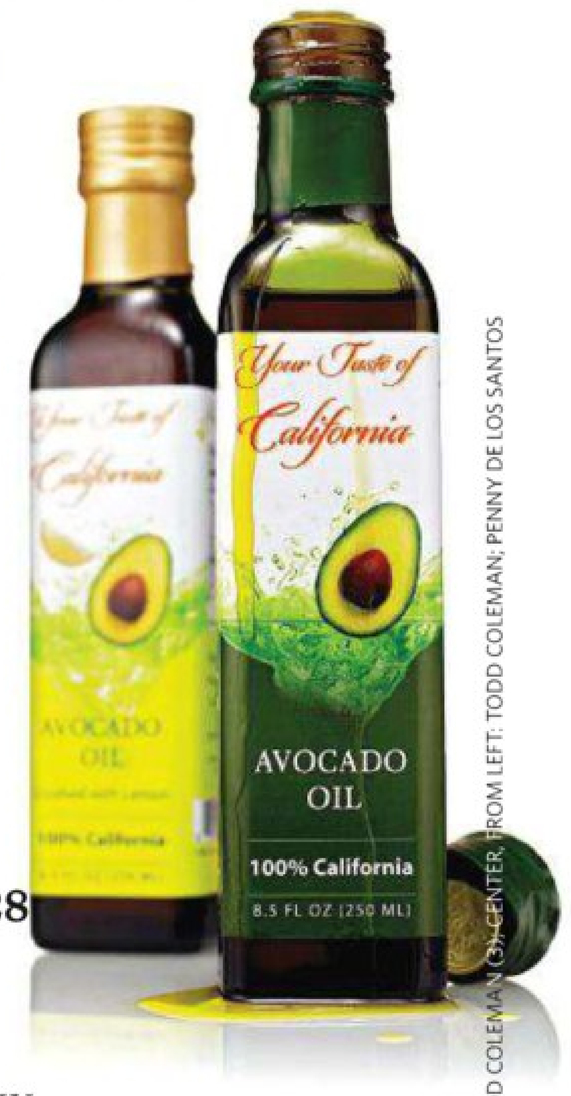
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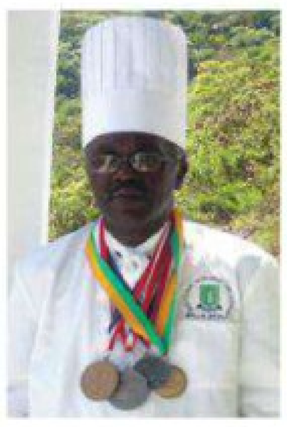
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NATURE'S LITTLE SECRETS







POWDERY WHITE BEACHES, lush green mountains and the crystal-clear aquamarine sea stretching to the horizon are only part of the allure of the British Virgin Islands. Then, there's the food. Once you've worked up an appetite after a day of snorkeling, yachting, fishing, kite boarding, being pampered at the spa, or simply relaxing on a pristine beach, let the BVI's award-winning chefs entice you with an assortment of culinary delights. From local delicacies such as coconut bread, to upscale assortments of fresh grouper, the flavors of the BVI will wow you.

The talented chefs of the BVI – both those who cook up delights at beach-side cafes or in fine-dining restaurants – are an inspiring hidden treasure. You can experience one of these all-star chefs, Executive Chef Willford (Willo) Stoutt, who helms the kitchen at Maria's By the Sea on Tortola Island.

A native of Tortola and an experienced chef of more than 20 years, Chef Willo shows off the unique, delicious cuisine of the BVI. He weaves their African, West Indian and Spanish influences together into signature Caribbean dishes like Butternut Squash-Stuffed Red Snapper Fillet with Tropical Caribe Sauce—a favorite of Chef Willo's for its warmly inviting aromas and beautiful juxtaposition of colors, flavors and textures. Chef Willo, who's widely recognized for his pivotal role in the advancement of the BVI as a culinary destination, loves the way this simply yet elegantly prepared, bright dish showcases the islands' bounty of local produce, fresh fish and exotic spices.

When the sun sets and your last course is finished, retire to one of the BVI's many alluring accommodations. Whether your choice is a family-friendly, pastel-colored cottage or a beachside luxury resort touting the ultimate in personalized pampering, the British Virgin Islands exude inviting hospitality.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH-STUFFED RED SNAPPER FILLET WITH TROPICAL CARIBE SAUCE

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 8oz. snapper fillet
- 1 cup diced butternut squash
- ½ cup chopped onions
- ½ cup chopped mixed peppers
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 tsp. chopped thyme
- 1 tsp. chopped scallions
- ½ tsp minced ginger
- 1 dash cumin
- ½ tsp. curry powder
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 2 cups diced bread croutons
- Flour for dusting

SAUCE:

- ½ cup coconut milk
- 1 cup diced pineapple
- 3 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. grated fresh ginger
- ½ tsp. ground all spice
- 2 habanero pepper, seeds and stem removed and diced
- 2 mango pitted and diced
- 1 banana
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- ½ cup dry white wine

In a sauce pan, sauté onion, peppers, garlic, thyme, scallion, and ginger. Then add curry powder, cumin and diced butternut squash. Simmer for 4-5 minutes and fold in the bread croutons.

In a sauce pan, combine the coconut milk, pineapple, sugar, ginger, all spice and habanero. Bring to a simmer and let it continue for 7 to 10 minutes, remove from the heat and let cool for 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl , add the mango, banana, lime juice, wine and stir well.

Rub the snapper in flour and season with salt and pepper, and then add stuffing. Pan sear until light brown, then finish cooking in the oven. Arrange the fillet on the plate and pour sauce on half of the fillet.

HIGHLIGHTS

Upon arrival you'll discover that BVI is a destination that provides culinary enjoyment to its guests.

From delicious local foods to succulent dishes, BVI's cuisine is an epicurean adventure that awaits you.

Chef Willo is a pioneer of the culinary advancement. His signature recipe, Butternut Squash-Stuffed Red Snapper Fillet with Tropical Caribe Sauce, showcases the bounty of local produce.

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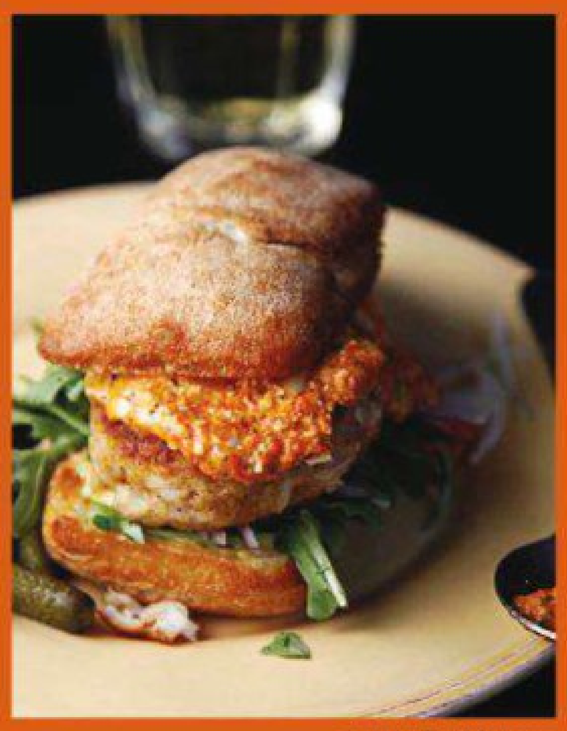


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SEPTEMBER

GOURMET TAILGATING

The great autumn tradition of tailgating would be little without food, and much more fun with a deviation from the standard fare.

CALIFORNIA CUISINE

The Golden State's fresh produce, dairy, and seafood has led native chefs to create rustic, flavor-forward dishes that prove influential country-wide.

OCTOBER

GLOBAL SMALL BITES

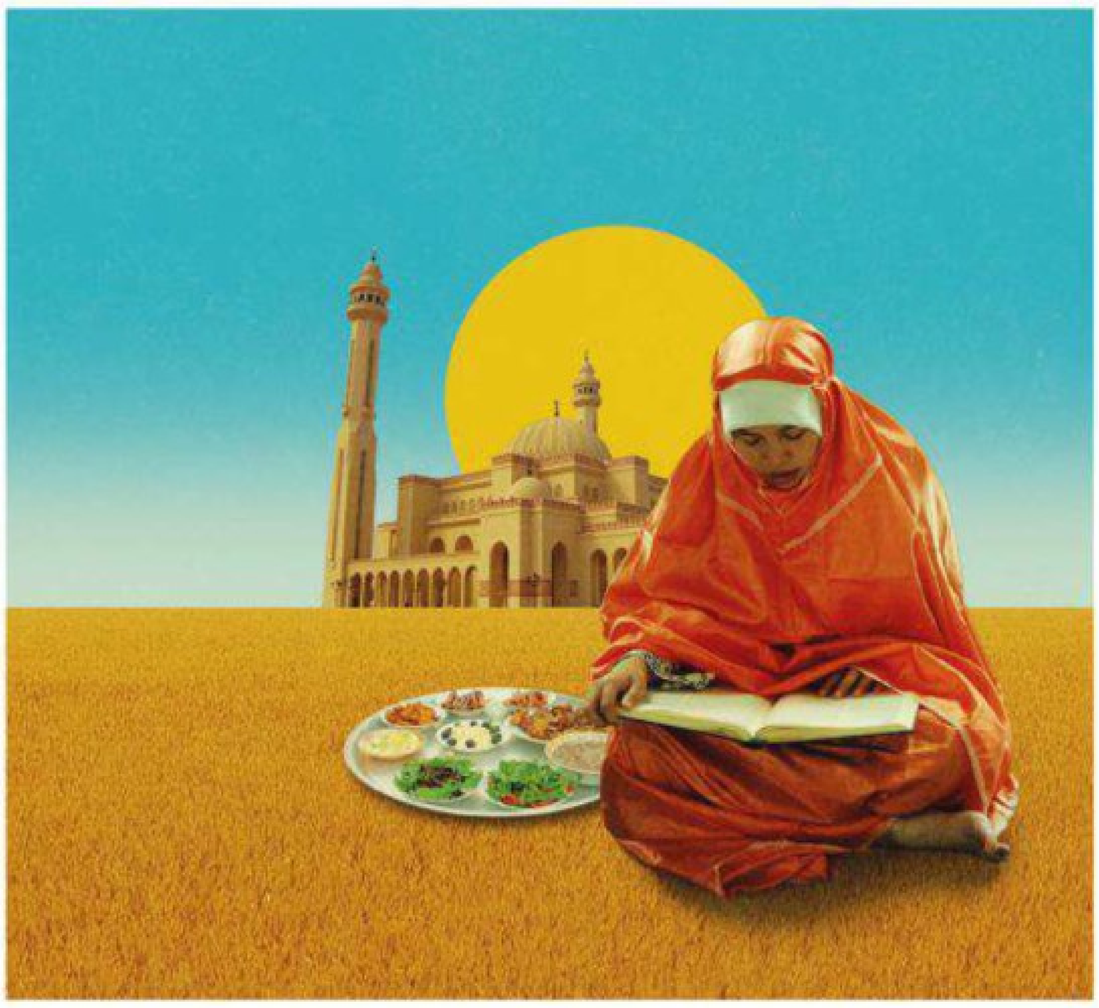
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Feeding Hunger

The joys of fasting and feasting

FOOD AND RITUAL go hand in hand. Think about the Christmas or Thanksgiving or Easter meals you and your family enjoy, with their wonderfully strict lineup of dishes. Or the structure that religion brings to eating: Hinduism's vegetarianism, the Jewish kosher diet, Catholicism's fish on Fridays. Or even the orchestrated drama of haute cuisine, with its precise parade of fancy courses and tableside preparations.

Though it's little understood in the West, one of the world's great food rituals happens every year throughout the Muslim world. During Ramadan, the entire culture (with the exception of the very young or the very elderly) partakes in a daily fast, from sunrise to sunset, consuming no food or drink, in order to purify themselves and intensify spiritual ties. The fast culminates in a nightly feast in which family, neighbors, and visitors sit down together to nourish themselves—a well-appreciated reward for their abstinence.

For this issue, SAVEUR contributor Anissa Helou traveled to the United Arab Emirates during Ramadan, and broke fast with meals taken in tents on mosque grounds, in homes, at a cultural center, and even on the street. As I read her descriptions of the dishes and the ways in which they were prepared, I recalled the years I lived in Indonesia when I, too, sometimes fasted for Ramadan. I thought about the cooks I know there, and how their food is all the more amazing for the fact that they cannot taste while they are preparing it. During Ramadan, a cook must rely on her senses: the smell of a spice in a simmering pot of rice; the look of oven-roasted shrimp, plump and pinkish; the way dough feels in her hands. It's a feat that highlights the discipline and sheer creative force behind this time of fasting, when one's routine relationship to food is transformed into something newly conscious and meditative. It honors the soul while denying the body's yearnings.

With everyone participating, there's also a feeling of love for community. At the end of the day, as you ease back into eating—with a few dates, perhaps, if you're in Abu Dhabi, or a palm sugar–laced drink if you're on an island in Indonesia—and then sit down with everyone else to revel in the food and the sustenance it brings, there is nothing left to feel but joy.

—JAMES OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief

ILLUSTRATION: MARK WEAVER

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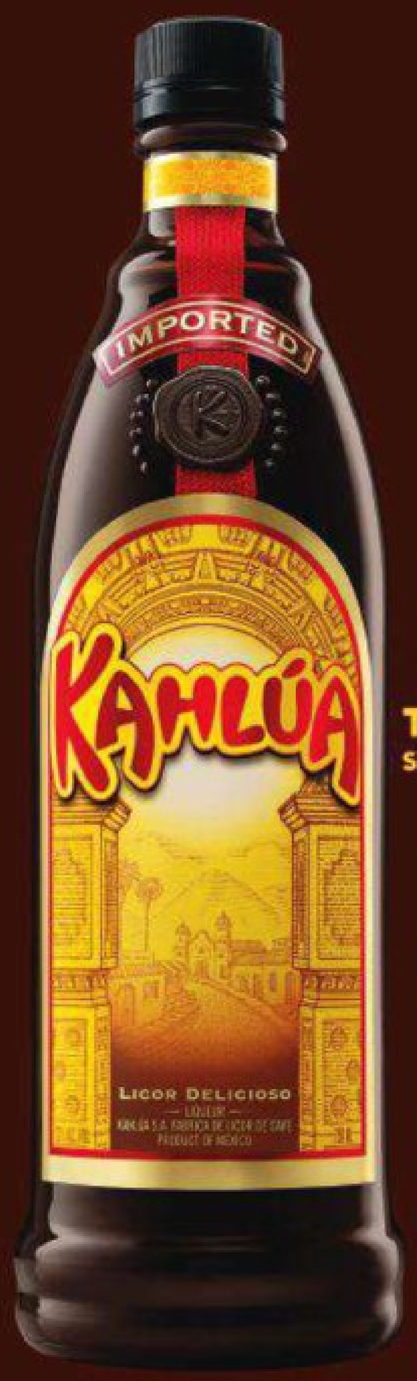
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FARE

Flavors and Finds From the World of Food, Plus Agenda and More



TODD COLEMAN

Summer Skewers

An Italian tradition in upstate New York

I GO WAY BACK WITH spiedies. During my childhood days near Rochester, New York, there was a trattoria, since gone, called The Vineyard that my family would hit for a night out. Next to the meatballs on the buffet were the spiedies—tangy, tender cubes of grilled pork on skewers that tasted exotic to our suburban palates. We couldn't get enough.

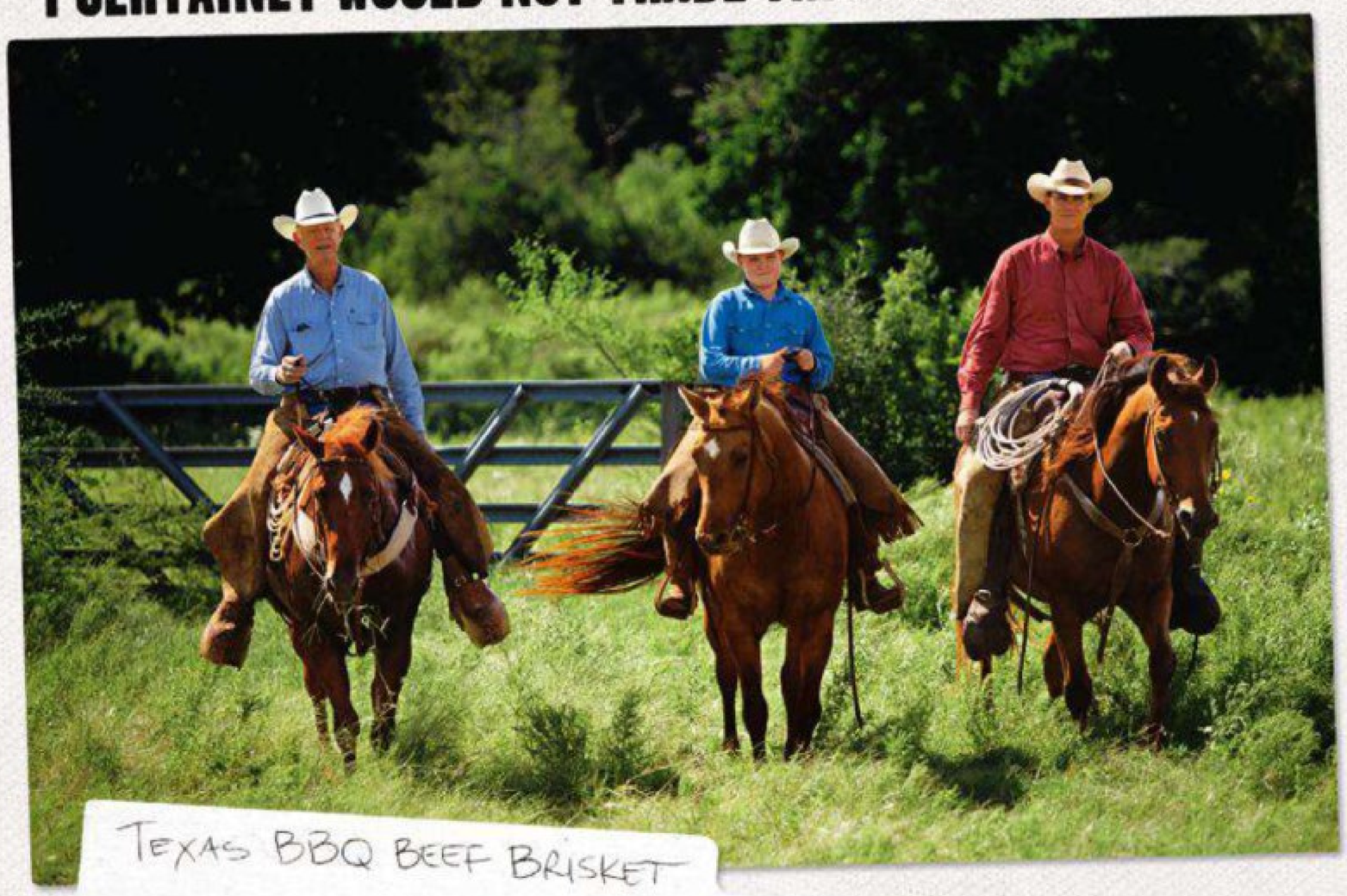
At the time, we did not bother to question the provenance of spiedies. Now that I am grown up and more curious, I find that Rochester is 150 miles northwest of the spiedie sphere of influence, which revolves around the tri-cities of Binghamton, Endicott, and Johnson City in New York State's Southern Tier. The story has it that spiedies, whose name is derived from *spiedino* or *spiedo,* Italian words for "skewer" and "spit," respectively, were the invention of Augustino Iacovelli, an immigrant from Abruzzo. Previously employed in the area's shoe-manufacturing industry, Iacovelli opened a restaurant called Augie's in Endicott in 1939 where the specialty was skewered chunks of lamb, rubbed with garlic and dry herbs, and basted with a vinegar wash during cooking. (That's them above; see page 18 for a recipe.) They

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FROM OUR TABLE TO YOURS

"I CERTAINLY WOULD NOT TRADE THIS FOR ANYTHING. I'm fourth generation here, born and raised on our family ranch. By about the early 1920s, my great-grandfather had a lot of this country put together by then. We're able to live and work on this beautiful land, and the best thing about it is that I too get to raise my family out here. It's a great privilege to be able to do what we do. Of course, someday, I'd very much like for my son to be able to pick up where I leave off."



TEXAS BBQ BEEF BRISKET

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TEXAS BBQ BEEF BRISKET



Total Recipe Time: 3 to 3½ hours

1 boneless beef brisket, flat cut (about 2½ to 3½ pounds)
3/4 cup barbecue sauce
1/2 cup dry red wine

Rub:

2 tablespoons chili powder
1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
1½ teaspoons garlic powder

Makes 6 to 8 servings

1. Combine rub ingredients in small bowl; press evenly onto beef brisket. Place brisket, fat side up, in stockpot.
2. Combine barbecue sauce and wine in small bowl. Pour around brisket; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover tightly and simmer 2½ to 3 hours or until brisket is fork-tender. Remove brisket; keep warm.
3. Skim fat from cooking liquid. Bring cooking liquid to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook, uncovered, 8 to 10 minutes or until reduced to 1 cup sauce, stirring occasionally.
4. Trim fat from brisket. Carve diagonally across the grain into thin slices. Serve with sauce.

Nutrition information per serving: 1/6 of recipe: 258 calories; 7 g fat (3 g saturated fat, 3 g monounsaturated fat); 62 mg cholesterol; 340 mg sodium; 8 g carbohydrate; 1.3 g fiber; 36 g protein; 5.6 mg niacin; 0.5 mg vitamin B_6; 2.6 mcg vitamin B_{12}; 3.7 mg iron; 37 mcg selenium; 8.7 mg zinc.

This recipe is an excellent source of protein, niacin, vitamin B_6, vitamin B_{12}, iron, selenium and zinc.

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caught on and spread to eateries across the region, including The Vineyard, which was opened in the 1980s by two of Iacovelli's sons. Today, the standard upstate New York spiedie is cubed pork or chicken marinated overnight in a zesty oil-and-vinegar concoction, grilled, and served on a metal skewer with Italian bread.

The specialty is so popular, particularly during grilling season, that there's an August festival dedicated to it. Precubed meat is sold for spiedies in markets, and though the marinade is easy to make yourself, prepared ones are widely sold. My sister, who now lives in Virginia, has Salamadia's Original State Fair Spiedie Sauce shipped to her by the case.

If you find yourself hungry near Binghamton, though, the thing to do is head straight for Sharkey's, an unassuming tavern whose reputation for spiedies is righteous and deserved. When I found the place on a recent visit, it was mostly quiet, with two old smokes parked at the bar and one booth filled. But the spiedies were as succulent as I'd remembered from The Vineyard, the earthy oil and the bright acids shaking hands and deciding to get along. I used the bread as a mitt to pull the meat off the spit. Then I ordered seconds. —*Brent Cox*

Spiedies

SERVES 2–4

These tangy kebabs are a regional favorite of New York State's Southern Tier.

- 1½ lb. trimmed pork loin, cut into 1¼" cubes
- ¾ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- 5 tbsp. finely chopped mint
- 5 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped oregano
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 bay leaf, finely crushed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 10"-long Italian hoagie rolls, split, toasted, and halved
- Lemon wedges, for serving

1 In a large bowl, toss together pork, ¼ cup oil, vinegar, 2 tbsp. mint, 2 tbsp. parsley, the oregano, lemon juice, bay leaf, and salt and pepper; cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 3 hours and up to overnight. Soak six 8" wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes; drain and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk remaining oil, mint, and parsley together with chile flakes, and season with salt and pepper; set sauce aside.

2 Build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, arrange an oven rack 4" below the broiler element and set oven to broil.) Thread four or five pork cubes onto each skewer. Transfer to grill (or foil-lined baking sheet), and cook, turning once, until charred and cooked through, about 10 minutes.

3 Place skewers on rolls; drizzle with sauce and serve with lemon wedges.



Lavender Wind Farm on Washington's Whidbey Island; below, roasted potatoes with lavender (see page 20 for a recipe).

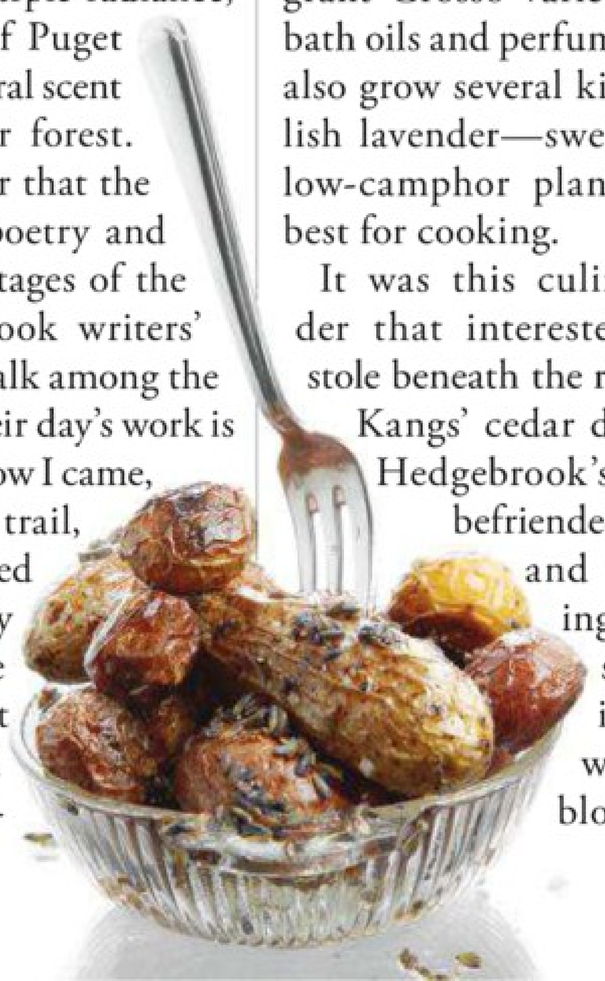
FROM TOP: ©LAVENDER WIND FARM; TODD COLEMAN

Edible Color

Lavender adds sweet flavor and beauty to many dishes

In late afternoons in high summer, the fields of Whidbey Lavender Farm on Washington State's Whidbey Island give off a purple radiance, and the breeze of Puget Sound lifts the floral scent toward the cedar forest. So it is no wonder that the women writing poetry and fiction in the cottages of the nearby Hedgebrook writers' retreat come to walk among the lavender when their day's work is finished. That is how I came, by way of a deer trail, to the fields planted by M.C. and Kay Kang. The couple started their first lavender field in 2005, after falling asleep in a bedroom scented with the just-picked blossoms at a friend's lavender farm in the mainland town of Sequim the previous year. Along with Sequim, Whidbey Island lies within a rain shadow, a lavender-friendly microclimate protected from too much precipitation by the Olympic Mountains. Most of the Kangs' plants are the fragrant Grosso variety, used for bath oils and perfumes, but they also grow several kinds of English lavender—sweet-smelling, low-camphor plants that are best for cooking.

It was this culinary lavender that interested me as I stole beneath the rafters in the Kangs' cedar drying barn. Hedgebrook's chefs had befriended the Kangs and were making sorbet and salted cookies flecked with their blossoms, but



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AGENDA

August/September 2011

August
12
Birthday:
JOHN CADBURY
1801, Birmingham, England
At age 22, Quaker John Cadbury



opened a shop on Birmingham's Bull Street where he sold temperance drinks, including hand-ground cocoas and drinking chocolates. In 1847, Cadbury opened a chocolate factory, where he was soon joined by his sons, Richard and George, who produced England's first starchless cocoa. Hundreds of confections followed—creamy Dairy Milk (1905); crumbly Flake (1920); the milk chocolate–covered Fudge bar (1948)—helping to make Cadbury the world's largest candy company today.

August
16–22
SULTANINA CELEBRATION
Sitia, Greece
In Sitia, a town on Crete's east coast, a weeklong festival celebrates the fragrant, white Sultanina grape (also known as sultana and Thompson Seedless). Drink local wine made from the grapes and enjoy the seedless fruit sun-dried into raisins. Cooks serve *tzoulamas* (chicken liver, pistachio, rice, and raisin pie) and desserts including *stafidopsomo* (yeasted sweet bread with raisins), *stafidopita* (liquor-soaked cake of walnuts and raisins), and spoon sweets. Traditional dancing rounds out the party. Information: 212/421-5777

August
19–28
CHAINAT POMELO FESTIVAL
Chainat, Thailand
Pomelo, the world's largest citrus fruit, prized in Southeast Asia for its tangy sweetness, is fêted during harvest in Chainat, Thailand. Vendors line up along the Chao Phraya River



to offer some of the dozens of pomelo varieties, including the festival's fruit of honor, the Chainat province's famed thin-peeled "White Cucumber" pomelo. Root for your favorite during the best pomelo contest. Information: 212/432-0433

August
26–28
CHEZ PANISSE 40TH ANNIVERSARY
Berkeley, California
In 1971, chef Alice Waters set about building a network of farmers and »

ILLUSTRATION: ELVIS SWIFT/JOANIEBREP.COM; FROM TOP: ©GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND (NY)

I soon learned that English lavender has a long history in the kitchen. Native to the Mediterranean, lavender was, in all likelihood, brought to the British Isles in the second century by the Romans, who used it for washing and bathing, as well as for cooking and winemaking. A member of the mint family and a relative of thyme, it lends floral and herbal notes to dishes. Today, farmers in France send their lambs to graze among the blooms, and French grandmothers cut lavender from roadsides for their kitchens. I followed suit, adding blossoms to crème brûlée, threading shrimp onto sprigs for the grill, and tossing the sweet dried herb with potatoes for roasting (see a recipe, below).

The Kangs don't sell their lavender, preferring to give it away, but the nearby Lavender Wind Farm does. I like to hang a bunch of theirs in my kitchen, where its fragrance transports me back to Whidbey Island's fields. —*Carolyn Forché*

Roasted Potatoes with Lavender

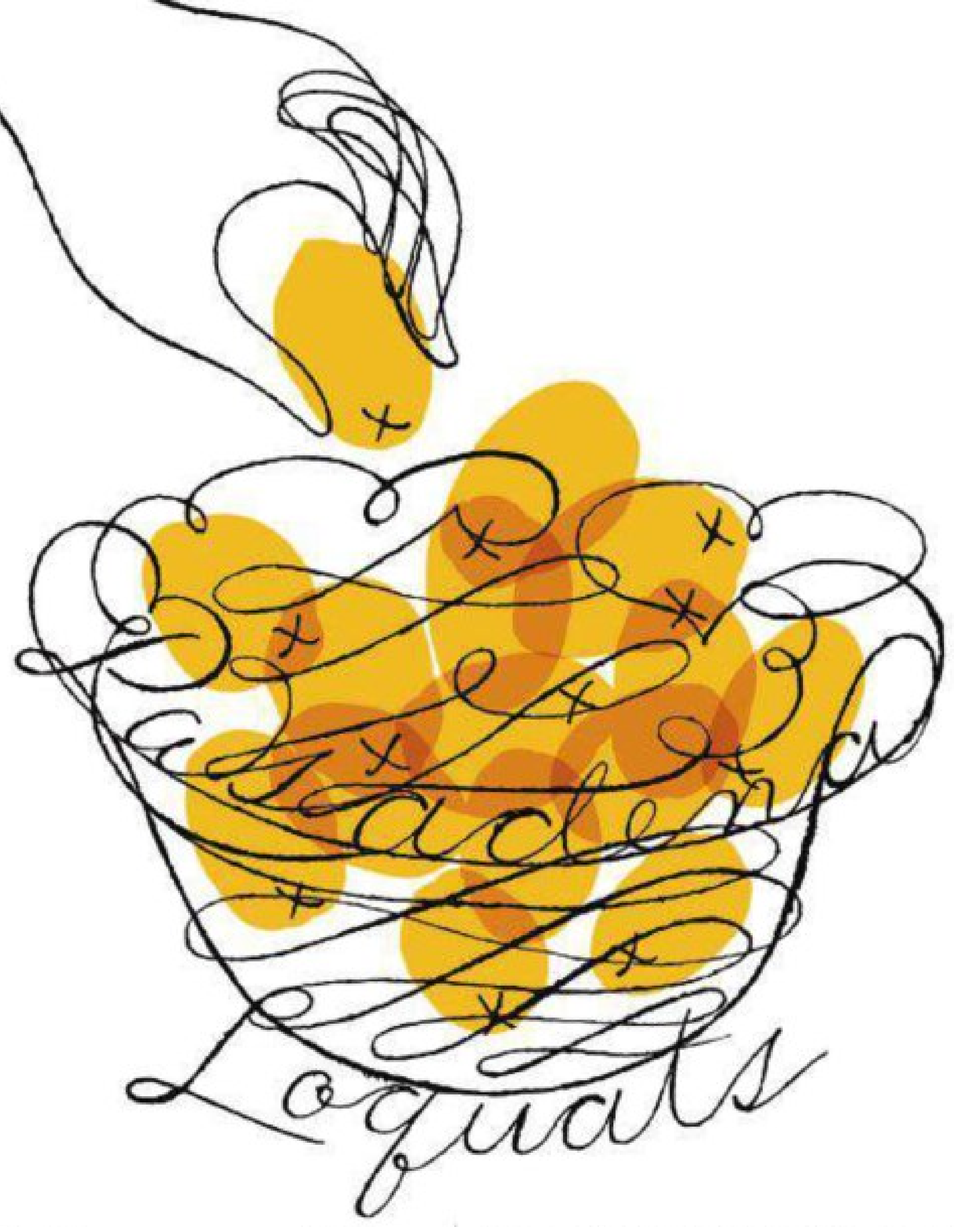
SERVES 6

This recipe is adapted from one in Jerry Traunfeld's *The Herbfarm Cookbook* (Scribner, 2000).

- **2 lb. baby Yukon Gold, fingerlings, or tricolor potatoes, scrubbed**
- **6 tbsp. olive oil**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **6 tbsp. unsalted butter**
- **2 tbsp. dried lavender**

1 Heat oven to 400°. Toss potatoes, oil, and salt and pepper on a foil-lined baking sheet, and roast, tossing occasionally, until browned and tender, about 35 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, heat butter in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; add lavender and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Pour over cooked potatoes and toss to combine; season with salt and pepper.



Sidewalk Citrus

The streets of Pasadena are dotted with exotic fruit

In Pasadena, California, in the 1970s, my best friend was a lanky girl named Youvet. She knew a lot about the world. She had a boyfriend named Nathaniel, and they would slow-dance to the Commodores. I was this nerd with glasses who attended a white, all-girls private school. She tried to help me get a clue. Youvet had to watch her younger brother Bernard while their mother worked. Bernard was always in trouble.

On the streets of Pasadena, teardrop-shape, apricot-colored fruits fell in soft plops on the sidewalk from tall, bushy trees. We would ride our bikes—banana-seat Schwinns—over the fruits to see who could squish them.

"Don't eat those. They're poisonous!" Bernard cackled. Youvet told him to shut up. "They taste good." She pulled one from a cluster on a tree and ate it. We waited for her to keel over. She survived. So we tried it, too. The fruit was soft and had smooth brown pits in chambers in the center. The taste was a cross between a citrus and an apricot. It was juicy and refreshing on a warm May day, but after that, I steered clear of these fruits, which I eventually learned are called loquats, not sure whether Bernard was right.

Loquats, or *Eriobotrya japonica,* originated in China, though it is believed that they entered California from Japan as ornamental plants in the 1870s. You see loquat fruits here and there in Pasadena farmers' markets and Asian groceries. But they're rarely cultivated in this country; the soft fruit doesn't keep well, and it's difficult to harvest, growing in clusters high up in the tree. Mainly you find them in abandoned lots, alleyways, and front yards.

After high school, I moved away for many years and then returned to Pasadena when my children were small. There was a loquat tree in the front yard of my son's preschool. I noticed the teacher had a bowl of freshly picked fruit sitting on the table. I remembered Youvet and the weekends of my youth. I couldn't remember the name. "What are those called again? Are they okay to eat?" I asked the teacher. She laughed, "They're loquats and they're delicious." I sat with my son, and we dug right in. —*Lonnée Hamilton*



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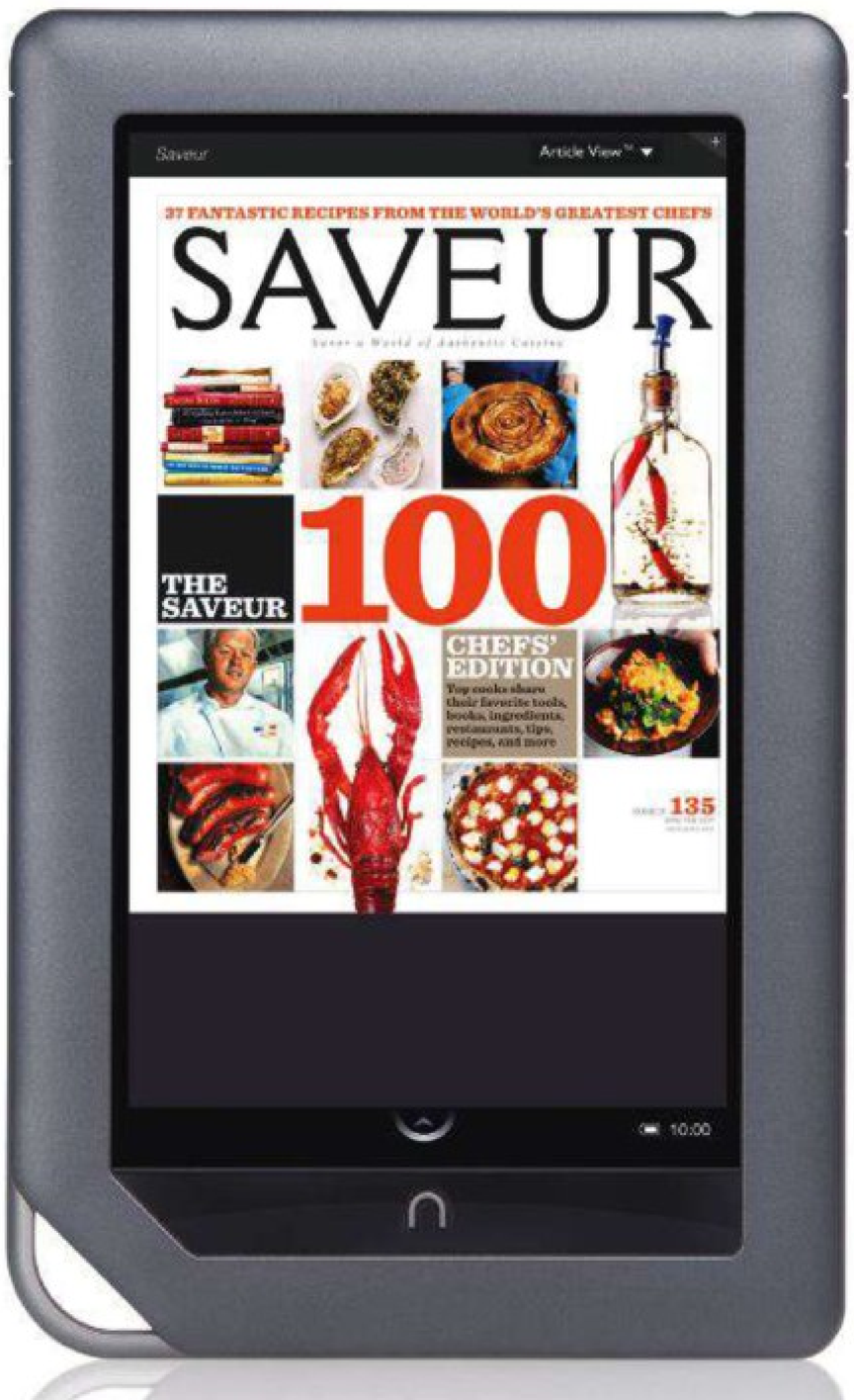


Holy Sweets

The farmers' market in Oak Park, Illinois, the Chicago suburb where I grew up, is a giddy scene. Chicagoans endure rough winters, so there's nothing like an earth-stained table covered with sun-ripened tomatoes to buoy the spirits until the next frost. Still, it's not the produce alone that makes shoppers happy; it's also the doughnuts. For 33 seasons of Saturdays, members of the Pilgrim Congregational Church (whose parking lot houses the market), and volunteers from other nonprofits, have arrived at 3:30 A.M. at the church basement—outfitted with a mixer, deep fryer, and doughnut dropper—to churn out treats for a nonstop queue. Plain or rolled in powdered or cinnamon sugar, the doughnuts are warm and sweet, with a melty crumb and a crackly, fresh crust. Today, whenever I visit my parents during farmers' market season, I make my way over to the church parking lot with one thing in mind: a doughnut. I stand with old friends in the shade, dunking a cinnamon-sugar doughnut in a cup of apple cider and chatting between bites, as summer lingers on. *—Leah Koenig*

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» other food producers to source local organic ingredients for her newly opened Berkeley restaurant, Chez Panisse, thus pioneering the nation's locavore movement. The restaurant celebrates its ruby anniversary with a weekend-long bash benefiting Waters' Edible Schoolyard project.



Festivities include an installation at the Berkeley Art Museum; goat milking and cheese making with local farmers; and of course, lots of eating. Score a signed copy of the book *Forty Years of Chez Panisse: The Power of Gathering* (Clarkson Potter, 2011). Information: chezpanissefoundation.org

September
10–11
CLEVELAND GARLIC FESTIVAL
Cleveland, Ohio

Nourished by the soil's high mineral content, more than 25 varieties of the stinking rose grow in northeastern Ohio, and several are used to flavor everything from ice cream to beer at this festival in Cleveland's Shaker Square. Watch the pros compete in a garlic cook-off and a server rodeo, and gobble up pungent eats, including the crowd favorite—fries dusted with powder made from Music garlic (a musky, hardneck variety) and served with aïoli. Information: clevelandgarlicfestival.org

September
17
WHITIANGA SCALLOP FESTIVAL
Whitianga, New Zealand

At the end of its winter, New Zealand heats up with the 7th annual party in honor of the scallop. On the North Island's Coromandel Peninsula,



recipe finalists go head-to-head in a cook-off featuring the local mollusk, and the 60 vendors turn out dishes like scallop sashimi and scallops crusted with local Cathedral Cove macadamia nuts, while winners of the scallop-themed poetry contest get their bard on. Information: scallopfestival.co.nz

September
22–25
EUPHORIA WINE FESTIVAL
Greenville, South Carolina

Chefs, sommeliers, and musicians from throughout the country and Canada descend upon Greenville for this sixth annual pairing of wine, food, and song. Tastings and cooking contests, dinners at local restaurants, wine seminars, jazz brunches, concerts, and behind-the-scenes sessions with musicians keep fest-goers euphoric. Information: euphoriagreenville.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF CHEZ PANISSE; ©DAMON MATTSON; TODD COLEMAN; ©TIFFANY LEEPER



Chef Todd Knoll's hand-harvested and prepared salts.

Worth His Salt

A chef collects a unique keepsake from his travels

I GREW UP IN Hawaii, on the south shore of Oahu. The waves come in clean and rough there; seawater collects amid lava rocks and heats in the sun. Walking among the pools as a kid, I could see the salt forming. I'd scoop it up and take it home. It had an umami flavor from the red ogo seaweed in the tide.

A few years back, I started harvesting sea salt to use in the kitchen at Jordan Vineyard & Winery in California's Sonoma County, where I'm the chef. The first time I tried it was in Naxos, Greece, during the summer: It was so hot, I just left the seawater outside to dehydrate. Four days later, I had big dusky flakes. The salt had a smokiness that was great on lamb.

For me, harvesting sea salt is a way of extending the concept of terroir; the salt takes on the character of the waters it comes from, and it pairs beautifully with local foods. Off Kauai, Hawaii, the sea is iron-rich; the salt adds meaty notes to pork dishes. In Baja, Mexico, I collected crystal-clear seawater while fishing; the resulting salt was pure and briny—perfect to cure and grill the mackerel I caught there.

Making salt is easy enough, and if done properly, it's safe. I stay away from storm runoff and collect in areas where the sea is pristine. First, I boil the water for a minimum of six minutes to kill bacteria. Then I set it in a nonreactive shallow pan in the sun to slowly dehydrate. That way, I get large, natural crystals, which add beautiful texture to dishes. If I'm in a rush, I boil out the water on the stove; the crystals end up smaller, but the flavor is the same. I love it because it's a living souvenir of my travels; every one of my salts has a story. I've even taken to mixing the salts with other ingredients, like dried tomatoes or juniper. —*Todd Knoll*



One Good Bottle

As a newly trained sommelier, I often have my textbook expectations upended by unusual wines. One such bottle is Kristine Ashe Vineyards "Entre Nous" Sauvignon Blanc 2008 ($34). Rather than the herbaceous tang I've come to recognize in sauvignon blancs, this white smells yeasty, and briny like the ocean. Ashe's team ferments half of the grape juice in 600-liter concrete eggs, a European practice that's gaining some traction lately in the States. The material allows the wine to breathe without adding woody flavors, and the egg's natural vortex constantly mixes yeast throughout the juice for added richness. The wine's aroma evolves into more-typical Californian ripe apricot and tropical fruit, but its unique, full-mouthed texture delivers lasting pleasure, and the flavor has a refreshing mineral edge. Try it with grilled fish or an aged goat cheese. —*Peter Weltman*

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Fresh grapefruit juice
Splash of club soda

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Fresh pineapple juice
Lime squeeze

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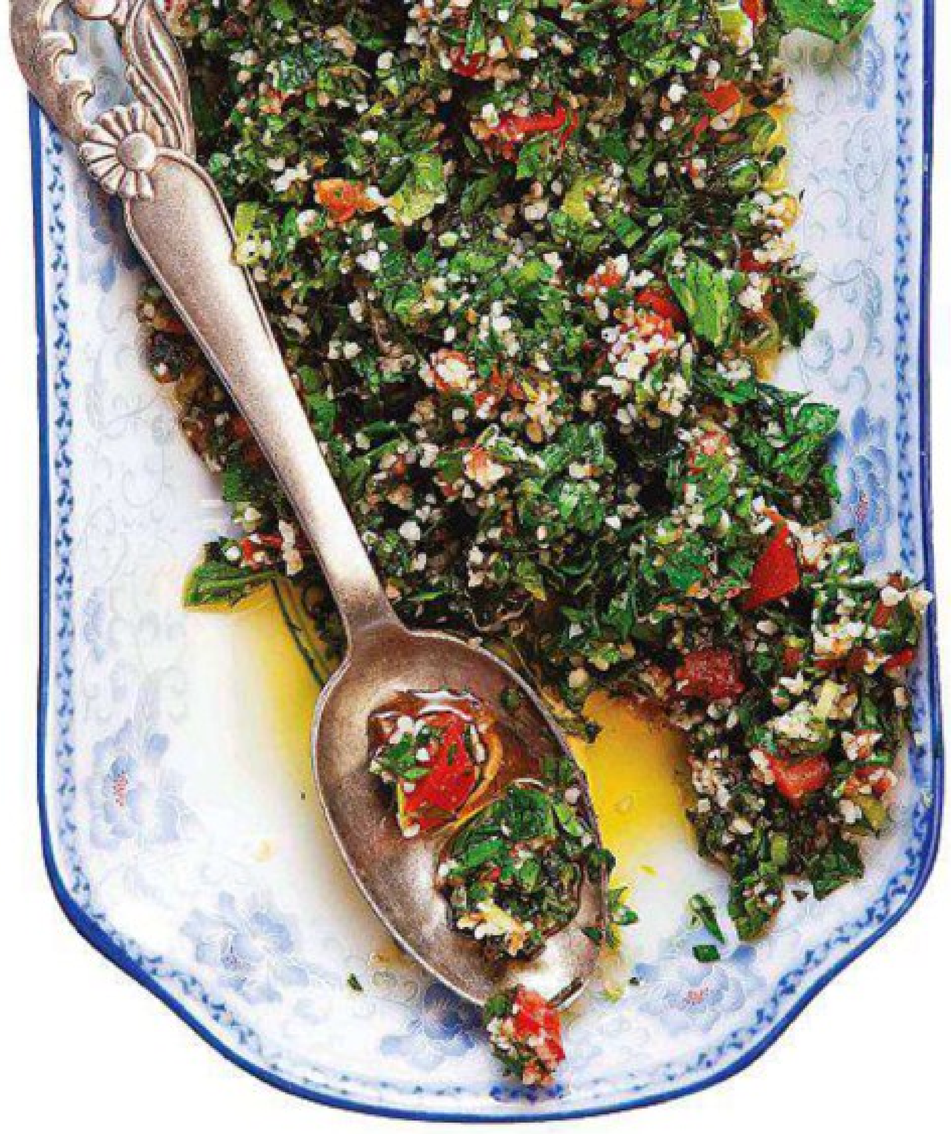
Side Show

For SAVEUR.COM's "One Ingredient, Many Ways" column, I explore myriad uses for a single, seasonal ingredient. Now that it's summer, my attention has turned to stone fruits, namely plums. First cultivated in China more than 2,000 years ago, most plums you'll find belong to one of two species: plump, juicy Japanese and small, firm European. Within these exists a startling diversity of colors and shapes, from the globelike, crimson Japanese plum called Santa Rosa to the oval, yellow-fleshed Stanley, a European variety. With their smooth, tart skin and luscious flesh that tastes sweeter as they ripen, plums add bright flavor to both sweet and savory dishes. Dense Italian plums, for instance, bring sweet tang to tarts, while Santa Rosas add punch to a plum–basil gin fizz. For these recipes and more, visit SAVEUR.COM. —*Leah Koenig*





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD COLEMAN (2); ©GIACOMO PERASTI; TODD COLEMAN (2)





Home to Table

A restaurant celebrates Lebanon's home-cooking traditions

On a recent holiday in Egypt, I took a detour to Beirut to explore the city's resurgent dining scene. Given images I'd seen of Lebanon's brutal 16-year civil war and more recent conflicts, I marveled at the capital city's newly rebuilt boulevards and seafront. At meze restaurants, I gorged on the bulgur and meat croquettes known as *kibbeh,* the creamy strained yogurt called *labneh,* and warm, puffed pita bread. Still, my friends in Beirut insisted that the best dishes can be found only in Lebanese home kitchens, cooked by women long steeped in the distinct cuisines of their region. This is the food I wanted to taste, but with only a few days in town, I wasn't quite sure how.

That's when I heard about Tawlet, a new restaurant whose motto—"*Shou tabkha el mama el yom?*"—means "What's cooking, Mom?" Tawlet is the brainchild of Kamal Mouzawak, a chef and the founder of Beirut's first farmers' market, Souk el Tayeb. The restaurant, whose name means "table," has become a showcase for the market's produce, but it is also a producers' kitchen, where farmers, herders, and cheese-makers—mostly women from nearby villages—cook traditional dishes.

When I visited, the lunch buffet featured *mfaraket koussa,* a simple stew of Lebanese zucchini, tomato, garlic, and dried mint; *kibbeh* in a tangy yogurt sauce; *makloubet djeij*, a biryani-like dish of rice, eggplant, and cauliflower; and, for dessert, a pistachio-topped milk pudding scented with orange flower water, all cooked by a woman from Chouf, a district wedged between the coast and mountains southeast of Beirut that is known for its stews and preserves.



Georgina al Bayeh prepares *kibbeh* at Tawlet.

But the menu at Tawlet changes daily, depending on the season and the specialties of the cooks. Another day might bring tabbouleh and *batata harra,* spicy fried potatoes (both pictured, above); or Northern Lebanese *mjadrat el loubieh,* a stew of red lentils, bulgur, and fried onions. For Beirutis, who spent years hunkering down during conflicts, the restaurant offers a chance to come out and celebrate the country's diverse culinary traditions. As Georgina al Bayeh, a 39-year-old Tawlet cook from the northern village of Kfardlekous, marveled, "Imagine how two villages within five kilometers from each other boast not one or two, but twelve different kinds of kibbeh!" —*Diane Ruengsorn*

THE PANTRY, *page 118: Info on where to sample spiedies, visiting Tawlet restaurant, and more.*

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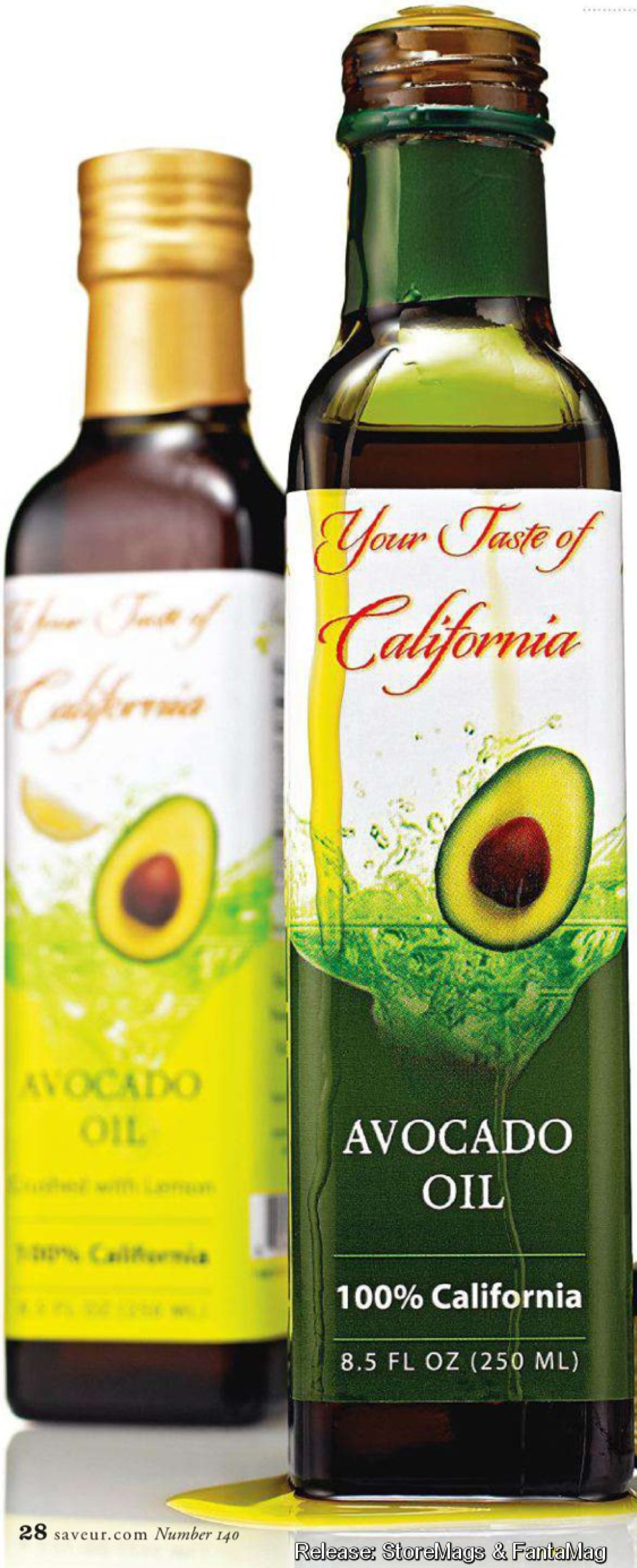


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Green Gold

Avocado oil is rich, smooth, and delicious

BY CARON GOLDEN

San Diego County is the avocado capital of the United States, and from spring through fall, its markets are inundated with different varieties of the fruit—luscious Hasses, satiny Fuertes, refreshing Bacons, thin-skinned Ettingers. I smash them on toast, slice them into salads, or just cut them in half and dip in with a spoon. Why do anything more? Their earthy flavor and buttery richness can't be improved.

They can, however, be bottled, as I learned when I met Cid da Silva, a farmer with a 40-acre organic avocado grove in Valley Center, California, who transforms the fruit into oil. "It's nutty with a velvety texture, and thick, so you don't have to use much," da Silva told me. Indeed, his Bella Vado avocado oil has all the qualities I adore in fresh avocados, captured in an emerald green liquid. He first started making the product in 2006, when he was faced with a bumper crop of the fruit. With a surplus on his hands, it occurred to da Silva that avocados' high fat content could translate into a flavorful oil, something producers in many countries, including South Africa, Mexico, and New Zealand, had already discovered. "It's truly a new world oil," said da Silva.

The oil is made from the flesh of ripe avocados that have been skinned and pitted. Da Silva uses Italian machinery that was designed for making olive oil to mash the avocados and separate the oil from the pulp. The liquid is pumped into a polisher, which, by spinning at a rate of 6,000 rpm, removes water and any remaining debris from the oil. Brilliant green and pure, the unfiltered oil is ready for bottling. Da Silva favors Hass avocados because of their high oil content and what he believes to be the best flavor.

Of the five types of oil da Silva makes—pure avocado, avocado with olive oil, garlic-, lime-, and lemon-flavored—I prefer the original and the lemon, which is made with the fragrant Eureka variety da Silva grows on his farm. I like to toss some with kale or Swiss chard, garlic, and salt, and roast the greens until they're crisp; surprisingly, the lemon flavor withstands the heat. Avocado oil has a high smoke point, which makes it great for frying, though I like to use it at room temperature to preserve the oil's distinct aroma and flavor—mixing it with herbs and chile flakes, say, to create a dip for bread. Because it's so mild, it's well-suited to drizzling over seafood and vegetables. I also use it in vinaigrettes, marinades, or to bring a fruity dimension to aïoli. The 250-milliliter bottles cost $10. To order, call 888/299-6457 or visit bellavado.com.

MICHAEL KRAUS

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Hot Stuff

A road trip across New Mexico unearth's the state's finest chile peppers

BY JANE AND MICHAEL STERN PHOTOGRAPHS BY PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

We did not set out on a chile-centric road trip. New Mexico cookery, a unique tapestry of Spanish, Mexican, Native-American, and Anglo influences, offers plenty of other signature dishes, from puffy sopaipillas (fried flatbreads) to spectacular pecan pie made with locally grown nuts. But dinner at La Posta de Mesilla, a 72-year-old eatery in a frontier settlement at the outskirts of Las Cruces on New Mexico's southern border, and a stroll through chile fields in the surrounding Mesilla Valley, were all the convincing our taste buds needed to make the chile pod our road trip's Holy Grail.

A skeptic could be forgiven for having suspicions about La Posta, a popular tourist destination complete with a gift shop and gaudy squawking parrots in the lobby. But believe us when we tell you that this venerable establishment in no way dumbs down the chile's brilliance. Jerean Hutchinson, whose great aunt opened La Posta as a four-table eatery in what once was a stop on a stagecoach postal route, delights in pointing out that chile powder is anathema in her kitchen. Her crimson chile sauce is made from whole red chiles grown and sun-dried at nearby Chavez Farms; they are stemmed by hand and then soaked and puréed, becoming chile essence. How hot is it? Not numbingly so. *Carne adobada,* cubes of pork marinated in this sauce and slow-cooked to pot roast tenderness, is just hot enough for the earth-and-sun flavor of the chile to boldface the meat.

As we made our way across New Mexico, chile peppers, the Land of Enchantment's official state co-vegetable (with the pinto bean), were everywhere. It was mid-September—harvest time—when days grow short, nights turn cold, and jade green chiles ripen red. By the side of the road, metal roasters filled the air with the late summer smell of freshly picked Big Jims and Anaheims tumbling over flames, the crackle of their hot seeds like manic popcorn. *Ristras* (wreaths), newly strung with supple dried pods, hung on homes and ranch gates and above convenience store ATMs. Cafés, diners, taverns, and white-tablecloth restaurants all served capsicum in countless forms. No matter what the variety, they're often advertised here as "Hatch Chiles" when they're green, named for the Doña Ana County town where the best of them grow. Hatch's annual Chile Festival, held over Labor Day weekend, attracts tens of thousands of chile lovers and, until recently, crowned both a red and a green chile queen.

Not far from La Posta, at New Mexico State University, Paul Bosland, regents professor of horticulture and founder of the Chile Pepper Institute, is lobbying for chile heat to be recognized as the sixth taste, along with salty, sweet, sour, bitter, and umami. Bosland is currently known in pop-food circles as the man who cultivated the bhut jolokia chile, also known as "the ghost pepper," which, at a million-plus units on the Scoville scale that measures capsicum ferocity, is officially the world's hottest pepper. (By contrast, jalapeños rate a measly 5,000.) Bosland took us out to a University garden in which all kinds of chiles are grown, from common bell peppers to the incendiary bhut jolokia. After noting that a single drop of the latter's venom will ulcerate human skin, he picked one of the inconspicuous orange pods from its bush and merrily rubbed it all over his eyelids, nose, and lips. "If you enter a hot chile–eating contest, you can beat anyone if you bite only the wall of the pepper," he informed us. "All of chiles' heat is inside, in the membrane."

Two hours north of Las Cruces we stopped at a roadside stand run by Sichler Farms and convinced the man roasting peppers to hand us a hot (temperature-wise) green pod straight from the wire cooking basket that turned like a rotisserie against a flame. The batch, he said, was medium-hot on the Scoville scale, but New Mexicans' medium-hot is everybody else's pretty-damn-hot. So we did like Bosland advised and tried to avoid the membrane (the inner flesh where the seeds are stored), gingerly biting only the al dente wall. It is not so easy. Lips began to tingle, and soon we were glowing with that warm endorphin rush that makes chiles feel dangerously addictive.

What was so wonderful about this unadorned pod—which we ate standing up, holding it by its stem and peeling back scorched skin—was that it perfectly expressed the ambiguity of the chile: It's a berry of the nightshade family (like the tomato) that agronomists know as a fruit but is so intensely green-flavored that it tastes like the ultimate vegetable. Sichler Farms sells more than a dozen varieties fresh, dried, and roasted, and makes chile powder in three degrees of heat that is so aromatic a single, sealed bag of it in our luggage perfumed not only the car's trunk but the passenger compartment as well.

Sichler Farms is located in San Antonio, an unincorporated crossroads on old U.S. Route 85 with a gas station–convenience store that makes fudge and sells locally bottled ciders. Aside from the store and the chile stand, the settlement's only other businesses are the Owl

A green chile cheeseburger at Bobcat Bite in Santa Fe, New Mexico. (See page 34 for a recipe.)

JANE *and* MICHAEL STERN *are contributing editors to* SAVEUR *and the authors of Roadfood.com.*

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From left to right: Roque Garcia, owner of Roque's Carnitas in Santa Fe; *carne adobada* (see page 34 for a recipe), a spicy red chile and pork stew at La Posta de Mesilla near Las Cruces; a worker harvesting chiles at Sichler Farms in San Antonio, New Mexico.

Bar & Cafe and the Buckhorn Tavern, a few hundred yards apart on opposite sides of Second Street. Despite their middle-of-nowhere location, these two joints attract hordes of pilgrims who come to eat green chile cheeseburgers.

While other parts of the country serve cheeseburgers garnished with chile (the pod) or chili (con carne), none can compare with New Mexico's best, in which the combination of juice-oozing, charred-edge red meat and creamy melted cheese is exalted by a full measure of flame-roasted, firm-walled, radiantly hot peppers. The Owl Bar lays claim to having invented the transcendent combo back in the early days of atomic bomb tests at nearby White Sands, when nuclear scientists used to come in after work for an explosive meal.

The Owl Bar is as much a place to drink as to eat—the sort of roadside oasis where you half expect to see Dean Moriarty pulling up in his road-ravaged 1949 Hudson. It opens at 8 A.M., and we well remember our first visit several years ago, when our worry about being viewed as weird for eating GCCBs (green chile cheeseburgers) at breakfast was allayed when we noted that other customers at the bar also were eating them along with shots and beers.

Since being featured on *Throwdown with Bobby Flay* on the Food Network recently, the modest-size Buckhorn Tavern has been nearly impossible to get into; when we arrived, well before the 11 A.M. opening time, the place was surrounded by customers. Media hype aside, chef Bobby Olguin does make a grand GCCB, here listed on the menu as a Buckhorn Burger, fully decked out with chunky roasted green peppers, tomato slices, mustard, red onion, lettuce, and pickle chips. The broad beef patty is wickedly juicy—30 percent fat—and shot through with garlic that underscores the vibrant flavor of its green chile crown. Olguin told us that he combines Sichler Farms medium-hots with chiles from Bueno Foods, a Mexican food company in Albuquerque.

The best GCCB, in our estimation, is made at Bobcat Bite on Old Las Vegas Highway at the southern fringe of Santa Fe, in the northern part of the state. Even discounting the chile and cheese, the burger itself is magnificent: Medium rare, the 10-ounce patty of ground chuck is more than an inch thick, its surface crisp from a spell on the 50-year-old cast-iron grill, its warm inside velvet-red and seeping juice that saturates the bottom of a broad bun that is artisan but not froufrou. Chopped green chiles are packed atop the burger and cheese is laid on top of those, heated just enough so it melts among the pepper bits and into crevices of meat. There could be no finer setting in which to enjoy the native dish than this snug, 26-seat café, a low-slung adobe building that started as a trading post along the original alignment of Route 66 and is still accoutered with a rail where you could hitch a horse if there weren't cars in the gravel lot. The name comes from its early days as a restaurant, when bobcats used to come down from the hills for backdoor snacks doled out by the kitchen staff.

Eating around Santa Fe is a whole other story, but when we arrived at the Plaza in the heart of town, there was one place we needed to visit to put an exclamation point on our

The Guide New Mexico

Bobcat Bite *418 Old Las Vegas Highway, Santa Fe (505/983-5319; bobcatbite.com)* Dating back to the earliest days of Route 66, this vintage eatery serves juicy burgers, rib-eye steaks, skillet-baked beans, and other diner classics.

Buckhorn Tavern *68 U.S. Highway 380, San Antonio (575/835-4423)* Adventurous eaters make the pilgrimage to this small joint for gorgeous green chile cheeseburgers and Frito Pie, a casserole made of beef chili and and Fritos.

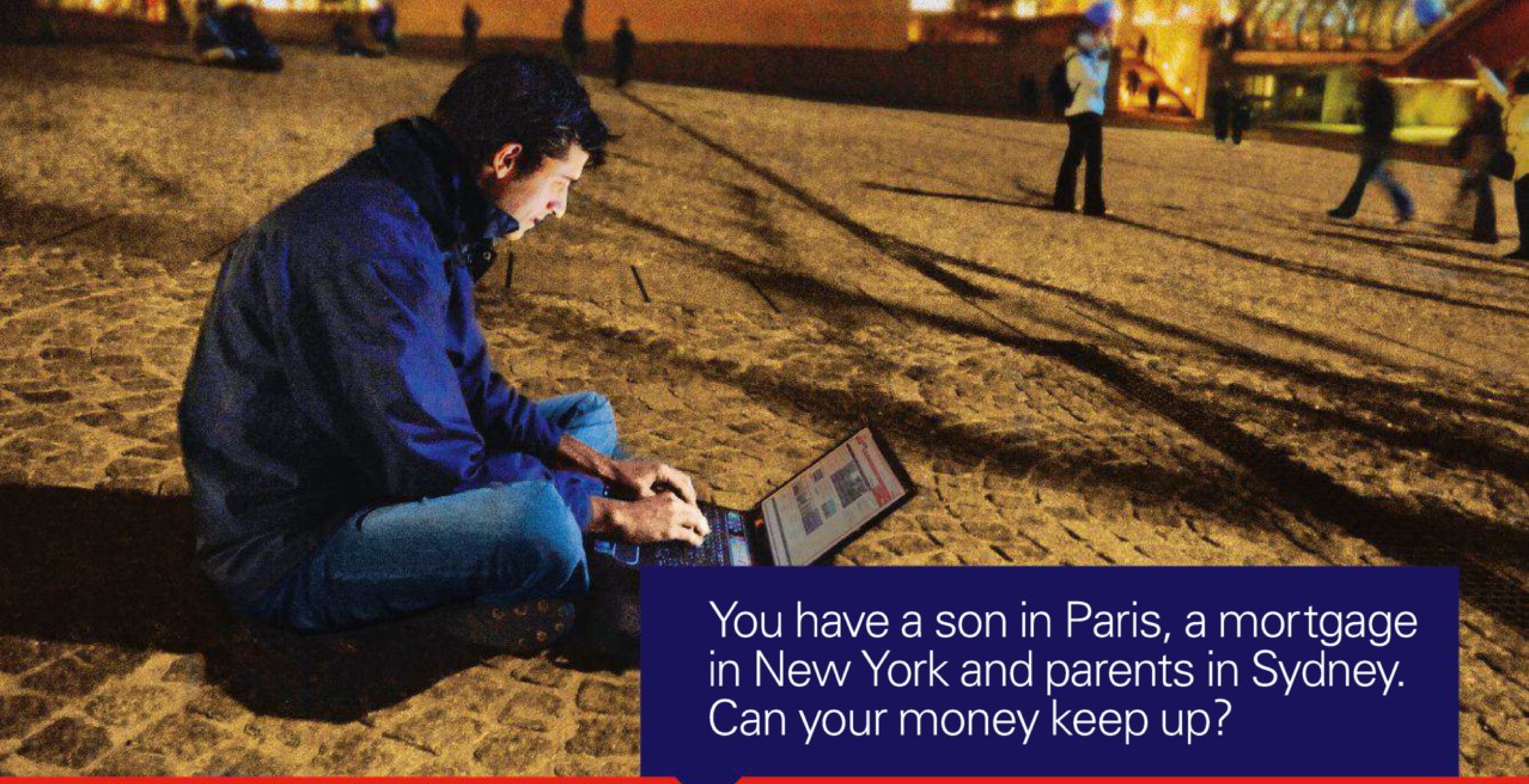
La Posta de Mesilla *2410 Calle de San Albino, Mesilla (575/524-3524; laposta-de-mesilla.com)* In a 150-year-old adobe building in the frontier settlement of Mesilla, diners savor such New Mexico classics as *carne adobada* (red chile and pork stew) and chiles rellenos.

Owl Bar & Cafe *77 U.S. Highway 380, San Antonio (575/835-9946)* One of San Antonio's two destination eateries famous for its green chile cheeseburgers, served for breakfast, lunch, and supper.

Roque's Carnitas: On the Plaza, *Santa Fe (505/438-9891)* This jolly little food truck parks at the corner of the Santa Fe Plaza and serves exemplary marinated beef strips, charcoal-cooked with onions and peppers and wrapped inside broad flour tortillas.

Sichler Farms *88 U.S. Highway 380, San Antonio (575/835-2839; sichlerchile.com)* You can't eat at this farm stand (other than hot chiles from the roaster), but it's a glorious place to stock up on chiles in all forms.

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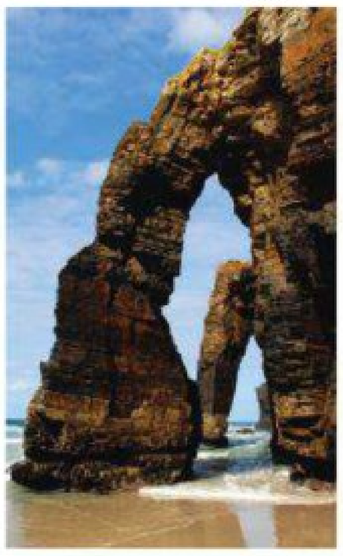
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Asturias

A taste of Nature's Paradise



Tucked between the Picos de Europa mountain chain and the Cantabrian Sea, the principality of Asturias is one of Europe's best kept secrets. It's part of "Green Spain" and rich in natural beauty. Asturias is where mountain meets sea and small communities nestled between valleys appear as though time stands still.

Unlike other areas of Spain that have become famous for avant garde cuisine, Asturias is the home of traditional cooking. Until recently many communities were relatively isolated from each other and culinary traditions remained intact.

It would be impossible to visit Asturias without spending some time in a local sidreria or cider house. Cider has earned Spain's Denomination of Origin status and flows freely in every sidreria. The sidreria is a convivial tavern where simple food is served family style and everyone is made to feel welcome.

Chef Seamus Mullen fell in love with the experience of the sidreria and always wanted to create his own version. This summer, he opens Tertulia in the West Village in New York City with a menu of simple preparations inspired by the traditions and ingredients of Asturias. Locally sourced meat and produce along with impeccable seafood simply prepared on a wood-fired grill are the stars here. In keeping with the tradition of the sidreria, affordable wines and cider are available on tap.

"There are so many great rituals around drinking cider, but the thing I love most about the sidreria is that it's a place where there are no rules and everyone is welcome. When you come to a sidreria, you leave your problems at the door," says the chef. "Tertulia is a place where you can drop in at any hour and have a bite, a snack or feast and feel right at home, whether you're in a suit or jeans and a t-shirt."



Seamus Mullen

photo courtesy of Colin Clark



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heat-seeking road trip: Roque's Carnitas. At this food cart, which parks near the intersection of San Francisco Street and the Old Santa Fe Trail, *carnitas* is not merely a word meaning "little meat." It is an effulgent sandwich folded inside a broad flour tortilla. Strips of garlicky, marinated top round beef are sizzled on a smoky grill with onions and slices of hot pepper, and are heaped with salsa that packs big-time jalapeño heat. It used to be that customers would have to find a bench on the Plaza to eat one of these behemoths because even though proprietor Roque Garcia wraps it well, inevitable spillage makes stand-up dining a wardrobe disaster. But Garcia recently has acquired about a half-dozen little yellow plastic stools that are scattered around the cart. Seating is catch-as-catch-can, but once you have secured your stool, you are free to move it upwind or downwind, depending on whether you want to inhale the intoxicating chile–meat smoke that puffs from the cart.

Carne Adobada

(Red Chile and Pork Stew)

SERVES 8–10

This hearty pork stew (pictured on page 32) is a staple dish in New Mexico. Our recipe is based on one served at La Posta de Mesilla in Mesilla.

- **5 oz. dried New Mexico chiles, stemmed**
- **2 tbsp. New Mexico chile powder**
- **2 tbsp. honey**
- **1 tbsp. white wine vinegar**
- **2 tsp. ground cumin**
- **1½ tsp. ground cloves**
- **⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper**
- **Juice of ½ lime**
- **5 tbsp. olive oil**
- **3 lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1½" chunks**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **Warm corn tortillas, for serving**

1 Heat chiles in a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat, and cook, turning once, until toasted, about 5 minutes; transfer to a large bowl, cover with 8 cups boiling water, and let sit for 20 minutes. Drain chiles, reserving 1½ cups soaking liquid, and transfer chiles to a blender along with reserved soaking liquid, chile powder, honey, vinegar, cumin, cloves, cayenne, and lime juice. Puree until smooth and set sauce aside.

2 Return pot to medium-high heat and add oil; season pork with salt and pepper, and working in batches, add pork to pot and cook until browned on all sides, about 12 minutes. Add sauce and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid is thickened and pork is tender, about 1½ hours. Serve with warm corn tortillas.

Green Chile Cheeseburgers

SERVES 4

Our version of these spicy burgers (pictured on page 31) includes a tangy chile sauce that Mauricio Barboza, a chef from Santa Fe, gave us.

- **2 lb. ground chuck**
- **1 tbsp., plus 1½ tsp. New Mexico chile powder**
- **1½ tsp. ground cumin**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **⅓ cup mayonnaise**
- **2 tbsp. ketchup**
- **4 cloves roasted garlic, mashed to a paste**
- **2 tbsp. canola oil**
- **6 roasted New Mexico chiles, peeled, stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped**
- **4 slices cheddar cheese**
- **4 slices Swiss cheese**
- **4 brioche buns, split and toasted**

1 In a bowl, combine chuck, 1 tbsp. chile powder, cumin, and salt and pepper; form into four 8-oz. patties and chill. Whisk remaining chile powder, mayonnaise, ketchup, garlic, and salt and pepper in a small bowl; refrigerate sauce until needed.

2 Heat oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium heat; working in 2 batches, cook patties, turning once, until a thick crust develops on both sides, about 10 minutes for medium-rare. Top each with ¼ of roasted chiles and 1 slice of each cheese; cover with lid to melt cheese. To serve, place 1 patty on each bottom bun and spread top buns with some of the sauce. Cover burgers with top bun and serve immediately.

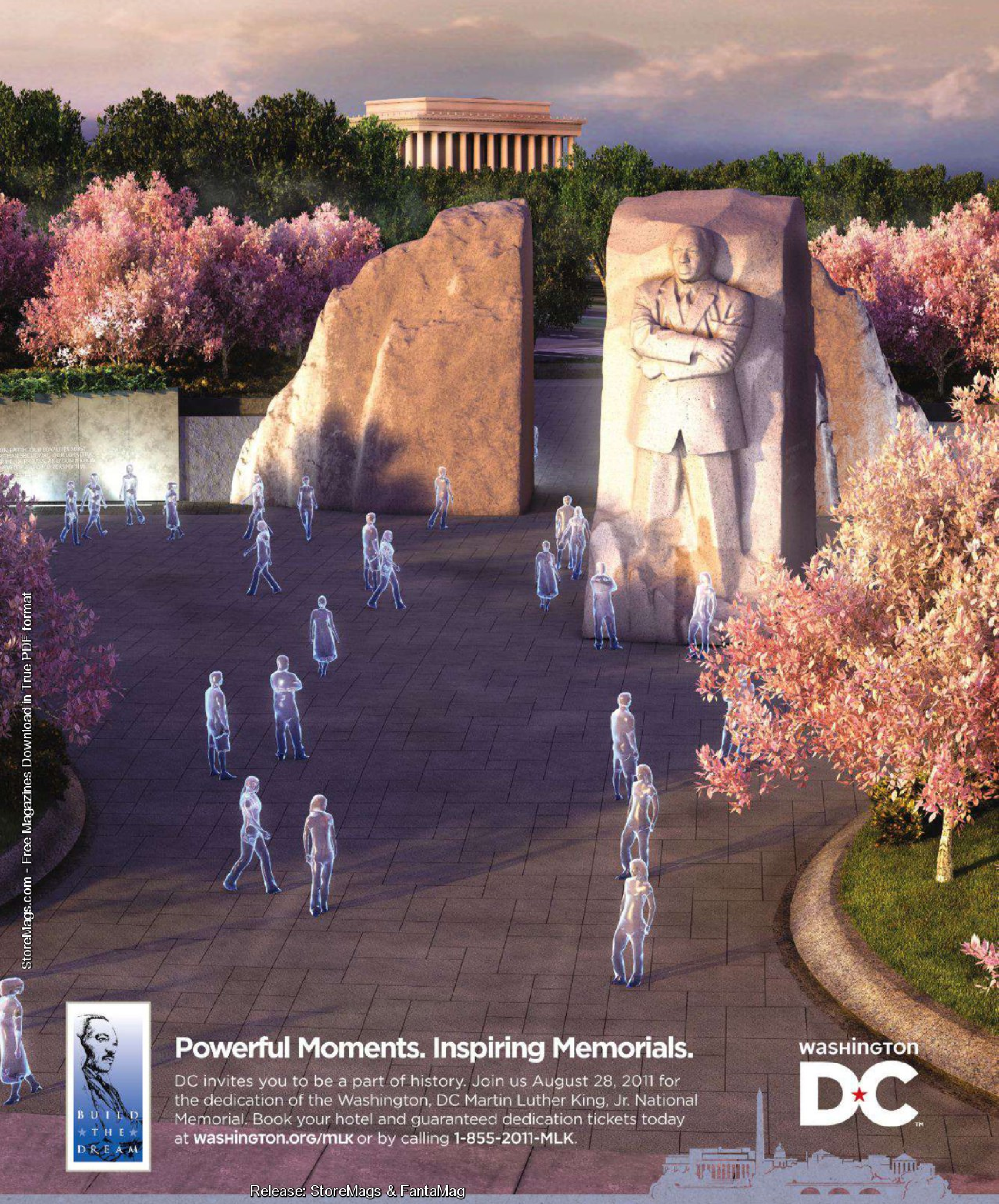
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Here's the Scoop

There's a science to making rich and creamy ice cream

BY MOLLY O'NEILL

Ice cream was the salvation of swampy summer nights when I was growing up in Columbus, Ohio. The promise of cool cones was reason enough to pile into the station wagon, roll down the windows, and outrun the heat lightning and mosquitoes. In the late 1960s, there were still a dozen or so family-run ice cream stands around town that made homemade ice cream with milk and cream from local dairies. By the time I'd graduated from college they were all gone.

Then along came Jeni Britton Bauer. Raised in Peoria, Illinois, an Ohioan by choice, she opened her first ice cream counter in 1996 at Columbus's old North Market. A former art student, Bauer had pink hair and lots of foodie, cow-to-cone ideas. But her insanely imaginative small-batch ice cream was so pure, so rich, and so deeply flavored that Central Ohioans forgot to be alarmed by her eccentricities. They also forgot that they are the original vanilla cone crowd and began lining up for scoops of chile dark chocolate and salty caramel ice cream.

What's revolutionary about Bauer's ice cream has a lot to do with her creative flavors, but even more to do with her innovative techniques: "You have to see ice cream as chemistry, a delicate dance between proteins, sugars, butterfat, air, and a few other equally unsexy components," she says. "Once you understand the role that each plays, you have complete freedom with ingredients. I really geeked out on it all."

Now Bauer, whose hair has long since been restored to its natural dark blonde, owns nine Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams stores in Ohio and one in Tennessee. And her new book, *Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams at Home* (Artisan, $23.95), walks readers through her technique, which she adapted for the home cook. It's a novel approach which achieves some of the creamiest, most saturated-in-flavor ice cream that I've ever tasted.

The problem with homemade ice cream is that it's often too soft or too dense, lacking a luscious mouth-feel. Bauer's technique addresses,

Molly O'Neill *is the author of* One Big Table: A Portrait of American Cooking *(Simon & Schuster, 2010).*



TODD COLEMAN

From left, three of Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams flavors: praline, beet, and chocolate. (See page 113 for recipes.)

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and solves, some of the common problems head-on.

Ice cream is basically a frozen emulsion, in which components that do not naturally meld—fat, water, and air—are encouraged to marry by adding such things as heat, proteins, sugars, and starches. The stronger the marriage, the more supple the ice cream will be. If water is not bound well with the other ingredients, it becomes nasty little ice shards that disrupt the smooth sensation on the tongue. Rather than using the traditional egg yolk to bind water and fat in the frozen emulsion, Bauer relies on the proteins in milk—casein and whey. She boils the liquid to reduce its water content, concentrating and denaturing the proteins, rendering them more likely to bind the water and fat. Bauer's other tricks include adding cream cheese, which is high in casein proteins, and using thickeners, such as cornstarch, which absorb water and prevent crystallization, for added insurance. Her use of natural corn syrup in addition to granulated sugar is also key: Its glucose is not as sweet in flavor as sugar's sucrose, and it binds with water, which helps prevent icing, too.

Her basic formula is foolproof, and applies to all flavors, from nutty praline to good old-fashioned chocolate. No matter what kind of ice cream maker you use (see KITCHEN, page 112), it turns out smooth, rich results. "That's the sexy part," says Bauer. "But you can't have that sizzle without mastering the unsexy stuff."

Ice Cream 101

This technique for making rich and creamy ice cream can be used for any flavor, including the sweet corn and black raspberry pictured below and the three varieties featured on the previous page.
(See page 113 for recipes.)



1 In a small bowl, mix milk with cornstarch to make a slurry. Cornstarch absorbs moisture, preventing ice shards; it also has a neutral taste, allowing the flavors of the other ingredients to shine.



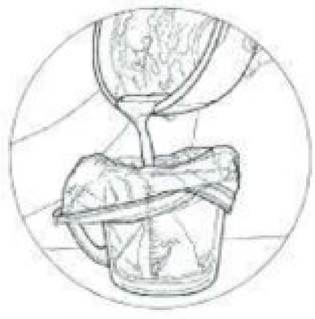
2 Pour milk, cream, sugar, and corn syrup into a saucepan; boil for 4 minutes. Heating the milk evaporates moisture and makes the proteins more apt to bind with the water, creating a smooth texture and rich flavor.



3 Stir the slurry into the warm milk mixture and return to a boil for 1 minute to thicken base. In another bowl, whisk the base into softened cream cheese a little at a time until smooth.



4 Pour the hot ice cream base into a large, resealable Ziploc plastic bag. Seal the bag, making every effort not to trap in air, and submerge the bag in a large bowl of ice water.



5 Submerging the bag in an ice bath allows it to chill more quickly: The shape of the bag provides maximum chilling surface area for the mixture inside, so it should be cold in 20 minutes.



6 Cut a corner off the plastic bag, pour the chilled base into the ice cream machine, and freeze according to your machine's directions until thick, smooth, and creamy.



TODD COLEMAN; ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER

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Making It Work

Sometimes the kitchen you want isn't the kitchen you get

BY MADHUR JAFFREY

My grandmother's kitchen in Delhi looked out on the Yamuna River, and fresh air blew through generous windows; my mother's kitchen there had three separate rooms. When I think of my ideal kitchen, I dream of space: of long granite counters, of places for my around-the-world seasonings and my collection of international crockery. When I see women in India turning out wondrous, multifaceted meals, squatting in front of a single burner in kitchens that boast of nothing more than gleaming brass pots, I begin to question my dreams. But I do not stop dreaming.

My husband and I have an apartment in New York City with a small galley kitchen, just a bit over eight-by-seven feet. When I was somewhat younger, we entertained there, cooking meals for dozens. I even taught cooking classes in it, though because of the tight quarters, the maximum class size was four. It was decidedly inconvenient. I dreamed of something larger.

When we bought a country house in upstate New York, all my kitchen dreams stayed intact—and unfulfilled. We loved the rambling old 1790s property. But it had a small kitchen, not much bigger than the one in the city. We could have enlarged it, but it would have been expensive, and there were two old maples outside the kitchen window that we could not bear to cut down.

The kitchen is not only small, it is completely outdated. We have never bothered to change the countertops, some wooden and some tiled, or the cabinets, which are probably 50 years old.

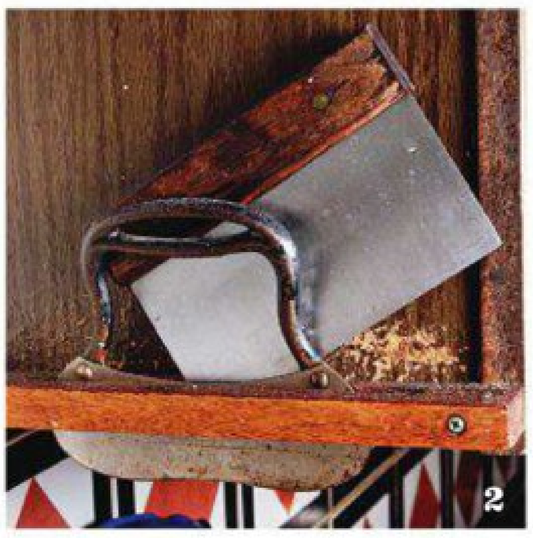
From left: On the stove in Jaffrey's kitchen is salmon in mustard sauce (foreground, see page 42 for a recipe) and spicy stewed eggplant; the author looking out of her kitchen window.

TODD COLEMAN (2)

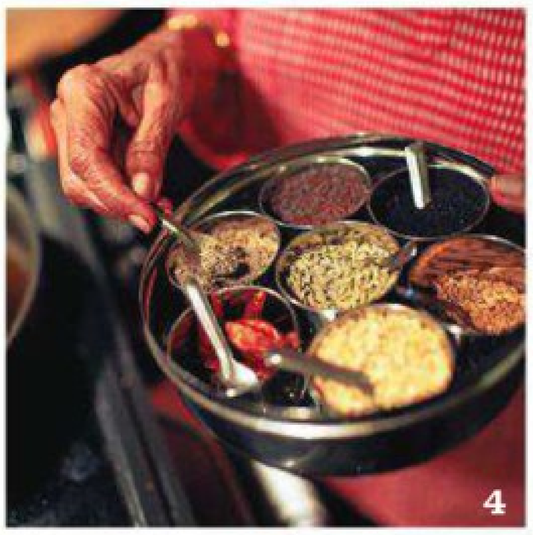
Madhur Jaffrey *is the author of* At Home with Madhur Jaffrey *(Knopf, 2010).*

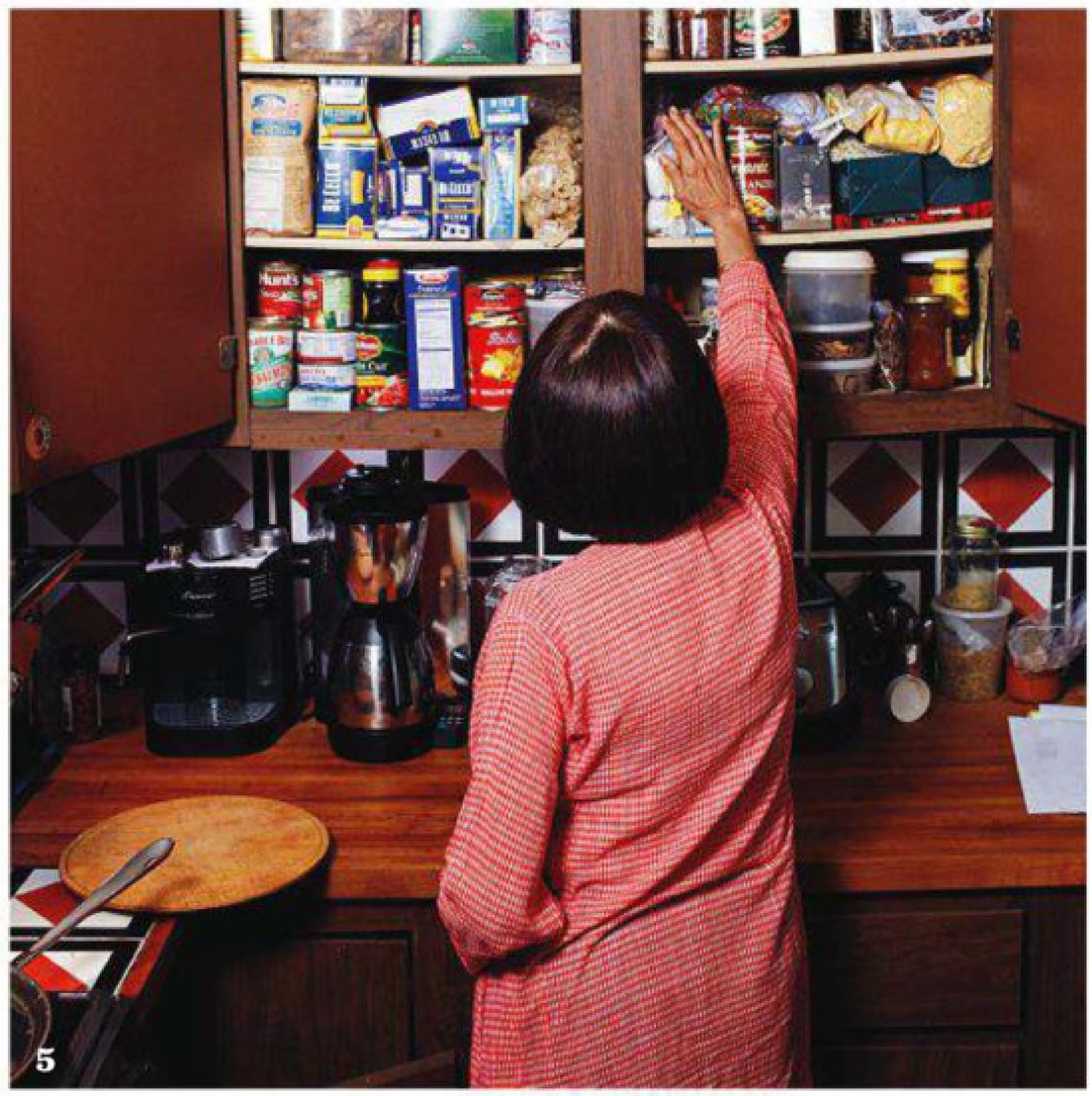
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Small Wonder Every inch of Jaffrey's small country kitchen is dense with the tools and ingredients she uses on a daily basis. A few strategies help make the most of the space. Every surface—even the floor—does double-duty. **1.** Jaffrey tests the seasoning in a dish of salmon in Bengali mustard sauce. **2.** An improvised cabinet rack holds a dough scraper and a mincer. **3.** The hard-to-reach storage space on top of the cabinets houses bottles of infrequently used sauces and oils. **4.** Meanwhile, next to the stove, a *masala dabba*, an Indian spice container, holds the spices that she uses the most in her cooking. **5.** Cupboard shelves accommodate a global range of dry goods and other pantry items.

We have changed only what we had to, the refrigerator, the stove, and the dishwasher, as the need arose. The GE, Thermador, and Kenmore appliances all have their quirks and eccentricities, but they are all ready to give up their lives in loving service. There is not enough counter space, so it's difficult to plate four courses each for 15 people. But still I do it, balancing plates on top of the toaster, the coffeemakers (always two, one for regular and one for decaf), and the microwave oven. I've realized that a dream kitchen isn't absolutely necessary: It's your aspirations for the food that make a kitchen come to life.

I collect platters from all the places I've traveled to, and these are stored around the house, in the laundry room and in old cupboards and sideboards in the dining room and parlor. As for spices and seasonings, do not even ask. My husband and I cook every day, and we cook foods from all over the world, so our cabinets have to hold more than the usual supply of spices, seasonings, and dry goods. I try to keep them organized and separated. Indian spices fill one whole revolving corner cabinet: coriander, cumin, turmeric, mustard seeds, fennel seeds, nigella seeds, fenugreek seeds, asafetida, varieties of black pepper, ground chiles of various sorts. I pile jar upon jar, always afraid that when I open the cabinet, the tiered spices will come tumbling down—which has happened often enough. Now, I open the door with one hand and protectively shield my head with the other in case the avalanche starts.

Then there are the Japanese noodles and nori and bonito flakes, the Thai seasonings and coconut milk, the Indonesian soy sauces, the Chinese rice wine and dried shiitake mushrooms, the Italian pastas and tomato cans, the dried rosemary, sage and thyme and Provençal herbs—and how can I not stuff in the cookies that my American husband loves?

How do I cook at all? You might well wonder. But kitchens shape the cook. In my case, my cooking has become all about organization and the very careful timing of every dish. Some foods, like curries and lightly stewed eggplants, are made ahead of time and refrigerated. Steamed dishes, such as old-fashioned British puddings, are made in the laundry room, which has a long counter normally used to fold laundry. Stir-fries are limited to dinners with fewer guests. For larger gatherings, the rice goes on five minutes before the guests are expected; it will take ten minutes to poach the salmon in the Bengali mustard sauce that has already been made and to reheat the okra soup on low; the lamb warming in the oven must be removed in 20. The blanched green beans resting on roasting spices should cook three minutes, no more. I have several timers going at every big dinner party. It is not the kitchen of my dreams, but I make it work for me. After all, it is the food that comes out of the kitchen that matters most.

Salmon in Bengali Mustard Sauce

SERVES 4

This Bengali dish (pictured on page 41) is adapted from *At Home With Madhur Jaffrey* (Knopf, 2010). Serve with cooked white rice.

- 4 3 oz. skinless salmon filets
- ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- ½ tsp. ground turmeric
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tbsp. mustard powder
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp. brown mustard seeds
- ¼ tsp. cumin seeds
- ¼ tsp. fennel seeds
- 2 serrano chiles, split

1 Rub fish evenly with half of the salt, turmeric, and cayenne; set aside. In a bowl, stir remaining salt, turmeric, and cayenne with powder and ½ cup water; set paste aside.

2 Heat oil in 12" skillet over medium-high heat; add mustard seeds; cook for 1–2 minutes. Add cumin and fennel, cook for 30 seconds; add paste and chiles. Add fish, and cook, basting, until done, 10–12 minutes.

TODD COLEMAN (5)

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ESSAY

Burning Bright

At the spicy heart of Mexican cooking is salsa

BY ROBERTO SANTIBAÑEZ

AS A HIGH SCHOOL kid, what drew me to the street food stalls of my native Mexico City was more than just the skill with which my favorite vendors fried, grilled, or stewed. It was the thrill of the salsas served alongside the main event. The best *carnitas* cook was reliable not only for his tender pork, but also for his bright-green *salsa verde cruda*, a lush mix of tomatillos, garlic, and fragrant serrano chiles whose heat and bracing acidity cut the meat's richness. I loved the quesadilla maker's brick-red salsa, in which citrusy pulla chiles existed in such perfect balance with garlic that I'd lie awake at night thinking about it.

At home, there was usually *salsa roja de molcajete*. In theory, its three main ingredients—tomatoes, chiles, and garlic—could produce pasta sauce, but when my aunt Chata made the salsa, the flavor was purely Mexican. She would begin her preparation on a dry, seasoned griddle called a *comal*, set over a flame. The tomatoes and serrano chiles would blister and blacken, a technique that concentrates the tomatoes' sweetness, transforming them from juicy to silky, and softens the chiles while imparting smoky depth. As she did with many of her salsas, Chata blended it in a *molcajete,* a mortar and pestle sculpted from volcanic rock. I'd drizzle it on warm tortillas and on Chata's inimitable beans. The bittersweet flavor defined my early life.

Salsa exists to enliven whatever it touches. The word simply means "sauce," and can be many things—a smooth purée, a chunky relish, a potent condiment. They can be raw or cooked, but most of all, salsas are defined by their purpose. One type is soupy, such as *chiltomate*, a thin, roasted tomato–habanero blend that I like as a braising liquid for pork. Others resemble sauces, to be spooned over an entrée—pan-fried peanuts and arbol chiles make a creamy, spicy cloak for shrimp.

Another category, perhaps the most recognizable to Americans, is a raw, chunky condiment, such as *pico de gallo*: chopped fruits and vegetables seasoned with chiles, herbs, lime juice, and salt. These crisp salsas lend flavor and texture to proteins. Then there are the raw salsas that are broken down into refreshing sauces, such as silky *guacamole taquero*—tomatillos blended with avocados, serrano chiles, cilantro, and garlic—my choice for dribbling on tacos.

Before the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, Mexicans didn't use the word *salsa* at all. Indigenous people in Central Mexico

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TODD COLEMAN

Roasted Tomatillo Salsa with Chipotle and Roasted Garlic

Taco-Shop Guacamole

Tomato and Habanero Salsa

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Spicy Fresh Pineapple Salsa

Tomatillo and Pineapple Salsa

Fresh Tomato and Olive Salsa

Burnt Chipotle Salsa

Peanut and Arbol Chile Salsa

Roasted Tomatillo and Serrano Salsa

called chiles pounded in a mortar with other native ingredients like tomatoes and wild herbs, *molli,* a Nahuatl word meaning "mixture." Salsas evolved as colonization and trade brought new foods such as limes, garlic, cilantro, and cumin, which came over with the Spanish.

Today, regional salsas are often a reflection of what is grown locally. Avocados are ubiquitous in Mexico, yet you mainly see salsas made with the fruit in the volcanic belt that traverses the country's center, where they are cultivated. In the semiarid north, tomatillos win out over tomatoes; the latter thrive in the subtropical Yucatan, where habanero chiles also grow. This convergence gives us *chiltomate*, the smoky-sweet salsa.

Despite the influence that geography has on salsa, there are no rules, no one dish that you serve a type of salsa with. And depending on technique, one set of ingredients can produce very different results. Roasting, for instance, renders tomatillos jammy, and mellows seasonings like chiles and garlic. If you prefer chunky salsa, pound garlic, chile, and salt to a paste in a *molcajete*, then mash in roasted tomatillos. For a smooth salsa, puree those ingredients in the blender. For a concentrated condiment, season the purée to the hilt with salt, lime juice, and chile, to make an intense sauce that matches emphatically flavored foods such as bluefish or lamb. To make a cooking liquid, dilute the sauce with water and simmer it to meld the flavors.

After making a few typical Mexican salsas, you might find yourself ditching recipes—substituting scallions for onions, or roasting peaches instead of tomatoes. That's what I do when I come home at night, too exhausted to cook. I look in my fridge and see what I have—maybe a few tomatoes and chiles—and broil them until they blister. I mash the chiles with garlic and salt, then mix in the roasted tomatoes. I breathe in the aroma. Now I'm home.

Chiltomate

(Tomato and Habanero Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

This fruity-spicy southeast Mexico staple is ideal on enchiladas or huevos rancheros.

- 1½ lb. tomatoes, cored
- 1 habanero chile, stemmed
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- ½ small white onion, minced

1 Heat oven to 500°. Place tomatoes and chile on a foil-lined baking sheet, and roast, without turning, until chile is browned in spots, about 10 minutes; transfer chile to a blender, and continue roasting tomatoes until blackened and cooked through, about 20 minutes more. Let tomatoes cool and then peel and place in blender along with salt and garlic; puree until smooth.

2 Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat; add onions and cook, stirring, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add purée, and bring to a simmer; cook, uncovered and stirring often, about 10 minutes. Let cool.

Guacamole Taquero

(Taco-Shop Guacamole)

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS

This creamy all-purpose salsa is great on tacos filled with *carnitas* or grilled cactus.

- 8 oz. tomatillos, husked, rinsed, and chopped
- ½ cup packed cilantro leaves
- 1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 serrano chiles, stemmed and chopped
- 1 ripe avocado, pitted, peeled
- ½ small white onion, chopped

Puree all ingredients in a blender until smooth.

Salsa de Chipotle Quemado

(Burnt Chipotle Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 1⅓ CUPS

Toasting dried chiles until they're brown and brittle creates a dark, smoky salsa that complements robust meats such as lamb and goat.

- 1¼ oz. dried chipotle chiles (about 7), stemmed
- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 small white onion, minced
- ¼ cup agave syrup (see page 118)
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 clove garlic, smashed

1 Heat a 10" skillet over medium heat; add chiles and toast, turning occasionally, until blistered and blackened, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a blender and set aside. Return skillet to heat and add 2 tbsp. oil; add onion and cook, stirring, until soft and lightly caramelized, about 12 minutes. Transfer to blender, along with syrup, vinegar, salt, garlic, and ¾ cup water; puree until smooth, about 2 minutes.

2 Heat remaining oil in skillet over medium-low heat, and then add puréed salsa; cook, stirring often, until salsa thickens and turns brick-red in color, about 45 minutes. Let cool.

Salsa de Cacahuate y Chile de Árbol

(Peanut and Arbol Chile Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

This smooth peanut sauce, a take on a traditional salsa from Chiapas, is delicious spooned on roast chicken or shrimp.

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ cup roasted unsalted peanuts
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- 6 dried arbol chiles, stemmed
- 8 black peppercorns
- 6 allspice berries
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small white onion, minced
- 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt

Heat oil in an 8" skillet over medium heat; add peanuts, thyme, chiles, peppercorns, allspice, garlic, and onion, and cook, stirring, until onion is soft, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a blender and add vinegar, salt and ½ cup water; blend until very smooth, about 2 minutes. Let cool.

Salsa de Tomatillo Asado con Chipotle

(Roasted Tomatillo Salsa with Chipotle and Roasted Garlic)

MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS

Roasted garlic adds sweet depth to this classic green salsa, best served over steak, tacos, or rice and beans.

- 8 oz. tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 3 dried chipotle chiles, stemmed
- ½ tsp. kosher salt

1 Heat oven to 500°. Place tomatillos on a foil-lined baking sheet and roast, turning halfway through cooking, until blackened in spots and cooked through, about 20 minutes; let cool.

2 Meanwhile, heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-low heat; add garlic and chiles, and toast, turning, until chiles and garlic are blistered and blackened in spots, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a blender along with tomatillos, salt, and ½ cup water; blend until smooth. Let cool.

Salsa de Tomatillo y Piña

(Tomatillo and Pineapple Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 3¼ CUPS

Try this tart, cooked salsa, a contemporary creation by Roberto Santibañez, spooned over seafood.

- 1 lb. tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 3 jalapeños, stemmed
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 lb. chopped fresh pineapple
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- 1 stick Mexican cinnamon, crushed
- 1 tart apple, peeled, cored, and roughly chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ cup passion fruit juice
- 1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp. sugar

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Kosher salt, to taste

1 Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of water to a boil and add tomatillos and jalapeños; cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.

2 Heat butter in a 12" skillet over high heat; add pineapple, cumin, cinnamon, and apple, and cook, stirring constantly, until beginning to caramelize, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring, until fruit is tender, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a food processor along with ½ cup water and puree until very smooth; pour purée through a fine strainer into a bowl and discard solids. Return purée to food processor and add boiled tomatillos and jalapeños along with garlic, and pulse until slightly chunky.

3 Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over high heat; add salsa and ½ cup water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring, until thickened, about 45 minutes. Add passion fruit juice, vinegar, and sugar, and cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat and let cool.

Salsa de Piña Picante

(Spicy Fresh Pineapple Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 1⅓ CUPS

Santibañez sees pineapple's firm texture and sweet-tart tang as perfect for salsa and an ideal foil for rich meats.

- 1 cup finely chopped fresh pineapple
- ¼ cup finely chopped cilantro
- 3 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp. fresh orange juice
- 1½ tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 jalapeños, stemmed and minced
- ½ small red onion, minced

In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients; serve at room temperature.

Salsa de Tomatillo en Molcajete

(Roasted Tomatillo and Serrano Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

This earthy roasted salsa is traditionally pounded to a smooth paste in a *molcajete*, but a food processor works just as well.

- 1 lb. tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 4 serrano chiles, stemmed
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ cup finely chopped cilantro
- 2 tbsp. minced white onion
- 2½ tsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp. olive oil

1 Position an oven rack 4" from broiler; heat to high. Place tomatillos, chiles, and garlic on a foil-lined baking sheet and broil, turning often, until blackened in spots and cooked through, about 10 minutes for the garlic and chiles, and 15 minutes for the tomatillos; remove each ingredient as it finishes cooking.

2 Place roasted chiles, garlic, and salt in a food processor and puree until smooth; add tomatillos, cilantro, onion, and lime juice. Pulse until roughly chopped. Transfer to a bowl and stir in oil.

Salsa Playera de Lujo

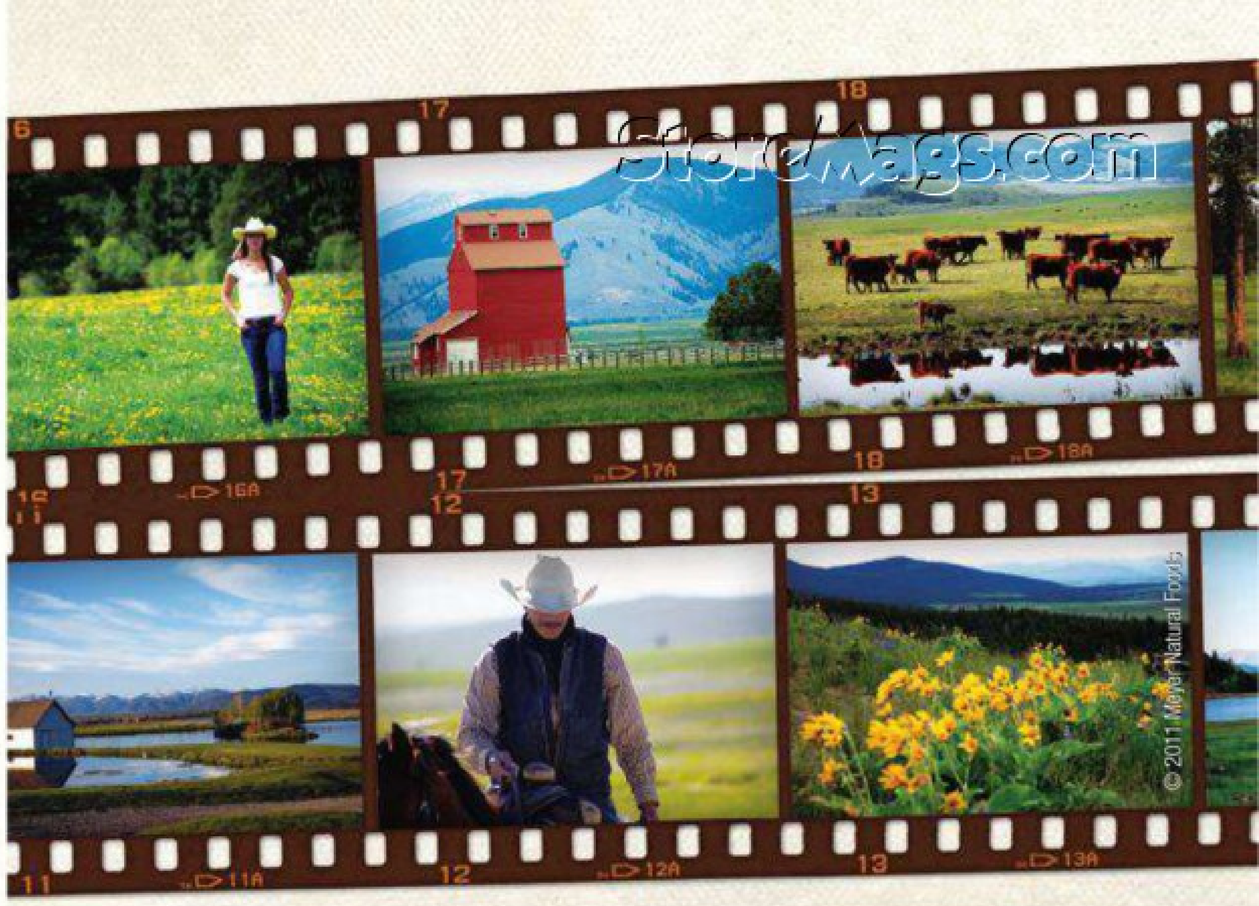
(Fresh Tomato and Olive Salsa)

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

This Acapulco-inspired pico de gallo gets a briny boost from olives and capers. Serve it spooned over grilled fish or chicken.

- 1 lb. ripe tomatoes, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped cilantro
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped pitted green olives
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped pickled jalapeños, plus 1½ tsp. liquid from jar
- 1 tbsp. capers, rinsed
- 1½ tsp. ketchup
- 1½ tsp. olive oil
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ small white onion, minced

In a large bowl, toss together all ingredients; let sit for 30 minutes to blend flavors. Serve at room temperature or chilled.



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Endless Summer

Rum is sunshine distilled

BY JEFF BERRY

RUM AND I FIRST MET in the late 1970s, at a beach bar in Malibu, California. The drink was a chaotic mix of pineapple, orange, and passion-fruit juices, with grenadine, garnished with a maraschino cherry bleeding red dye onto a chunk of canned pineapple. Even with all those elements competing for my attention, the personality of the rum shone through, fiery and flirty. I wanted to get to know this spirit more intimately, but I soon discovered that rum has multiple personalities: Any liquor distilled from sugarcane or its byproduct molasses can bear the rum label; hundreds of brands, produced on every continent except Antarctica, now do. These rums range in character from crystal-clear to dark brown, bright and floral to smoky and rich.

Rum also has baggage: a 350-year history of scandal, from its illegitimate birth on Caribbean sugar plantations, where it was made by forced labor and used as barter in the slave trade, to the low company it kept among pirates and Prohibition-era rumrunners. And then came rum's association with postwar Polynesiacs who put tiki torches in their yards and umbrellas in their drinks. By the time I discovered them, rum cocktails were considered syrupy, silly. But once I began studying their history, I learned that they were—initially, anyway—actually sophisticated drinks, worth taking seriously. And it was rum's multifaceted character that made it all possible.

Over the years, I've been able to track down many seminal recipes invented by

Rum cocktails, including tiki classics and contemporary creations, clockwise from top left: Flamingo, Petit Punch Vieux, Chairman's Refresher, Eureka Punch, Mai Tai, The Naked Ape, and Zombie. (See page 52 for recipes.)

TODD COLEMAN

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Donn Beach, who single-handedly created the tiki bar in 1934, when he opened Don The Beachcomber in Hollywood. Although his bar's decor was Polynesian, Beach found his alcoholic inspiration in the Jamaican Planter's Punch. He took this simple combination of lime, sugar, and rum and ran with it; while no bartender would ever dream of mixing three different gins in a martini, Beach routinely combined different styles of rum in the same punch, creating a complex base spirit that no one bottle, no matter how good, could approach on its own.

Beach employed this method in most of the 60-plus original drinks at Don The Beachcomber—including his most powerful Planter's Punch riff, the Zombie (see page 53 for a recipe). Beach's most famous imitator, Victor Jules "Trader Vic" Bergeron, created the Mai Tai (see page 53 for a recipe), an exquisite mix of two different rums, lime juice, orange Curaçao, and almond-flavored orgeat syrup that became tiki's signature tipple—and as time went on, in lesser hands, made with cheap ingredients, a sticky-sweet example of its excesses.

The tiki fad aged out in the 1980s; by the time I started getting interested in classic rum cocktails, I was largely reduced to re-creating the drinks myself based on what I found in old recipe books and bar menus, or what I could glean from conversations with veteran bartenders. Today, budding rum enthusiasts can find what they're looking for in craft cocktail bars around the country. Bartenders have rediscovered Beach's rum-mixing technique and are using it to make both classic and new cocktails. Jamie Boudreau, who recently opened the bar Canon, in Seattle, has even served me what he calls the Mai Tai 3000: a classic Mai Tai deconstructed into bite-size squares of jellied rum—multiple varieties per square, of course—topped with orgeat foam.

Back in the early days of my rum education, I could have used a guide like Martin Cate, who stocks more than 300 brands of rum at his bar Smuggler's Cove, in San Francisco, where connoisseurs sip it neat as well as in cocktails. His diverse collection reflects rum's evolution over the last century. "Historically, rum was made only in wooden or copper pot stills, which yielded a more impure distillate but, as a result of these impurities, a very flavorful one," Cate says. "Today most rum is distilled in steel columns, often with a measure of pot distil-

Straight or Swizzled

Although rum is produced in every country that grows sugarcane, the best cane spirits come from rum's birthplace, the Caribbean. Just a few years ago, almost all Caribbean rum exported to the U.S. was used for mixing in cocktails and punches; the idea of rum as a sipping spirit was almost completely foreign to Americans. Now the tide has turned, and connoisseurs of scotch, bourbon, and tequila are shifting their attentions to rum. Rum's incredible diversity provides a spectrum of flavor profiles to explore, both in the aged sipping and the younger mixing categories. Here are my picks for both. —*J.B.*



For Sipping

① **Dos Maderas PX 5 + 5** ($40). A marriage of Bajan and Guyanese rums, aged for five years in the Caribbean and then shipped to Spain and transferred to sherry casks for another five (hence the "5+5" moniker). A

TODD COLEMAN

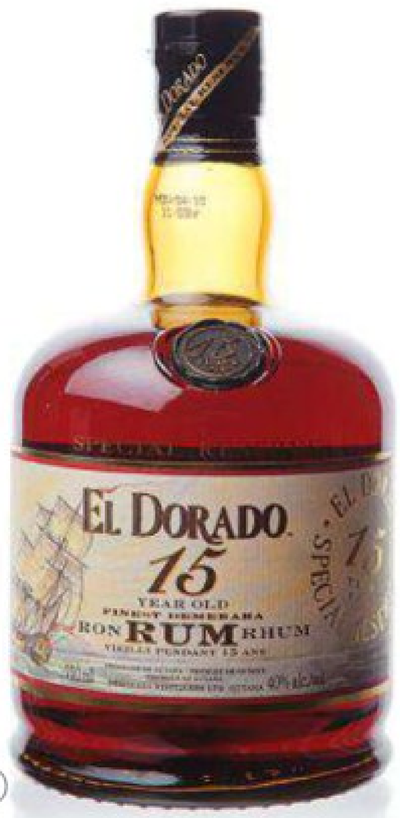
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late added for depth of character." What this means is that there's more variety than ever on the market, with rums ranging from light- to heavy-bodied, depending on the blend, with a thousand variants in between.

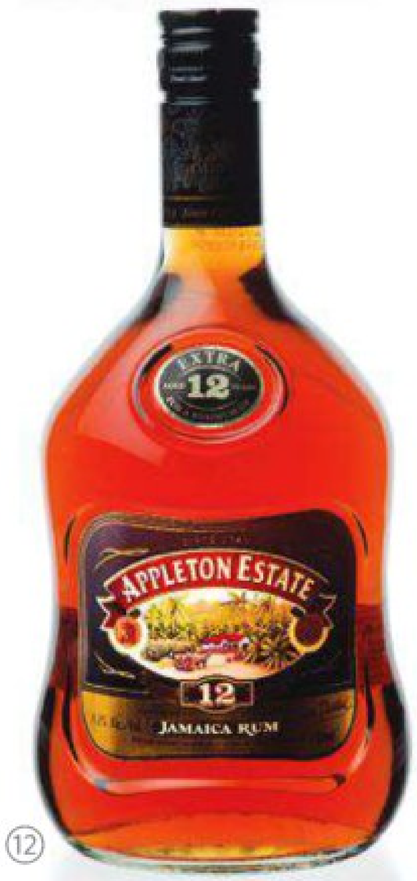
Parsing these variants can be frustrating at first; it certainly was for me. I could begin to gauge the worth of a scotch or cognac by the age printed on the label, but rum's never been subject to the codified production standards of those spirits; age statements can be misleading since blenders routinely cut old rum with new. It didn't help that most rums on U.S. shelves—then as now—came from the Caribbean, a family of islands that share no common language or cultural identity. Just as the word *Caribbean* is falsely homogenizing, so is the term *Caribbean rum*. A clear, light-bodied Cuban rum has as much in common with a black, syrupy Jamaican rum as chablis does with pinot noir. But in the end, I hit upon a strategy for finding the right bottle for my tastes. The first step was acquainting my palate with three somewhat arbitrary but still useful categories: *ron, rhum,* and rum.

Ron is the Spanish word for rum and the term of art for rums produced in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Although Puerto Rico is the biggest producer, Cuba and two countries of the former Spanish Main—Nicaragua and Venezuela—make the best of these generally light-bodied distillates, which range from dry, clear white rums to golden, more layered

JEFF BERRY *is the author of* Beachbum Berry Remixed *(SLG Publishing, 2010). His last article for* SAVEUR *was "Spirits of Polynesia" (March 2010).*



⑥



⑫

bewitching blend of clove, pipe tobacco, espresso, tawny port, and orange.

② **Smith & Cross Traditional** ($29). This is how rum tasted before industrialized production filtered out the esters and congeners—impurities that give flavor and depth. Smith & Cross is a brawny blend of Jamaican rums bottled at "navy strength" (114 proof). It's peaty and peppery with a whiff of roasted chestnuts and spiced apple.

③ **Neisson Réserve Spéciale** ($65). A beautifully balanced Martinique *agricole vieux*, with a sensual, silky, elegant charm and a golden hue evoking late-afternoon sunlight; butterscotch and almond predominate.

④ **Rhum J.M. 1997** ($120). A voluptuous 10-year *agricole vieux* with hints of sage, brown butter, and lemon. A long, spun-sugar finish makes it a perfect dessert rum.

⑤ **Cruzan Single Barrel Estate** ($30). With its creamy mouth-feel and vanilla accent, this approachable blend of aged Virgin Islands rums just might convert non-rum drinkers. Not only that, but it's a bargain (so much so that mixologists have started using it in drinks; see Martin Cate's Eureka Punch on page 52).

⑥ **El Dorado 15 Year Old Special Reserve Demerara** ($35). Sweet but not cloying, this Guyanese rum plays a symphony of notes: cedar, cigar, praline, fig, caramel, cinnamon. (Choose it over El Dorado 21-year, whose woodiness overtakes other flavors.)

For Mixing

⑦ **Appleton V/X** ($20). A mellow, medium-bodied rum useful for recipes that specify gold Jamaican. Dominant notes of orange and allspice add a welcome layer to cocktails and punches without throwing off the mix.

⑧ **Lemon Hart 151-Proof Demerara Rum** ($30). You can't make a Zombie without it, or any of Don The Beachcomber's famous concoctions. Its smoky, burnt-molasses flavor was Beach's secret weapon.

⑨ **Chairman's Reserve Gold** ($22). Though not made in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, this St. Lucian rum is perfect in drinks that call for *ron añejo*. A full-bodied but not overassertive blend of aged rums—some from pot stills, hence its richness.

⑩ **Rhum Clément V.S.O.P.** ($43). At four years of age, this Martinique *agricole* is the ideal Mai Tai rum: young enough to avoid absorbing too much oak, old enough to have some character.

⑪ **Flor de Caña Extra Dry White** ($15). Most contemporary Spanish-style white rum has been leached of flavor by distillers chasing the vodka market. But Flor de Caña's has enough personality to perk up classic cocktails like the daiquiri. Rummy but not aggressively so, with a floral nose.

⑫ **Appleton Estate Extra** ($30). Expensive but simply the best dark Jamaican rum on the market for tiki drinks.



Tempting your taste



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añejo (aged) rums. For those who lean toward vodka, white *ron* is a good gateway rum. It's essential for classic Cuban cocktails like the daiquiri and the mojito, which call for a subtler base spirit that doesn't overpower other ingredients; I especially like the smooth, nuanced Flor de Caña, from Nicaragua (see "Straight or Swizzled," page 50). Scotch drinkers are better candidates for *ron añejo,* which spends up to 12 years in oak casks, as opposed to one or two years for white *ron,* mellowing and ripening as the wood imparts character to the raw spirit. While the deeper flavor *of añejos* encourages sipping neat, it also brings complexity to a full-bodied tiki punch like the Zombie (see facing page for a recipe).

Rhum denotes rums of the French-speaking Caribbean, the best of which come from Martinique. The island specializes in *rhum agricole,* or agricultural rum, distilled from fresh-pressed cane juice, as opposed to the molasses used to make other rums (called *rhum industriel* or *rhum traditionnel* in this context). Fermenting and distilling cane juice yields a grassy, vegetal spirit unlike anything else in the world of rum. Young, tequilalike white *agricole* is too harsh for sipping; Martinicans mix it with lime and cane syrup in their national drink, Petit Punch, or 'Ti Punch. This drink tastes even better with a rich, perfumey *agricole vieux,* aged from three to 15 years and—alone among rums—subject to the same strict aging guidelines that France applies to its homegrown spirits. What's more, according to rum historian and importer Ed Hamilton, "*Agricoles* aren't aged in American oak like other rums. They mature in French oak, which imparts a nutlike flavor instead of the usual vanilla." Many *vieux* bottlings, such as the top-shelf offerings from Neisson and Rhum J.M., approach the depth and complexity of XO cognac.

Finally, there's rum, the category for white, gold, and dark molasses-based rums produced in the former English colonies of the Caribbean—a big tent, including the amber, medium-bodied rums of St. Lucia (such as Chairman's Reserve) and the Virgin Islands (Cruzan); the pungent, heavy dark rums of Jamaica (Appleton makes the best of these); and my personal favorites, the smoky and woody Demerara rums of Guyana (as a kid watching pirate movies, I imagined the rum they swigged would taste like the Demeraras bottled today by Lemon Hart and El Dorado). Bourbon and Irish whiskey drinkers are drawn to the bold flavors of English-style rum, much of which is still pot-distilled. While rum is usually poured over ice in the English-speaking Caribbean, I like the way rums in this category lend ballast and brashness to a cocktail.

Over thirty years after my first sloppily made, radioactively garnished rum cocktail in Malibu, I found myself on the opposite coast, having the opposite experience at Manhattan's PDT Bar. Like his fellow craft cocktail revolutionaries, PDT's co-owner and chief mixologist Jim Meehan is continuing to push the limits of rum's mixological potential. "Rum gives me options, and I love options," Meehan told me as he assembled a new cocktail he calls the Chairman's Refresher. I took a sip. The canny combination of coconut water, Frangelico, and cucumber enhanced, rather than tamed, the brassiness of the English-style rum that had inspired Meehan to create the drink (see below for recipe).

As he started mixing my second round, Meehan told me that he uses rums—and *rons* and *rhums*—from all over the Caribbean in his cocktails. "It's the diversity of rum that makes it so rewarding. It can be tacky, sophisticated, sweet, earthy, old, French, or Dominican. There is a rum, and therefore a rum drink, that will please almost anyone."

Chairman's Refresher

Makes 1 cocktail

This cocktail, from Jim Meehan of PDT bar in New York City, uses Frangelico to accentuate the nuttiness of fresh coconut water.

- **3 slices cucumber**
- **¾ oz. hazelnut liqueur, such as Frangelico**
- **2 oz. coconut water**
- **1½ oz. English-style white rum, such as Chairman's Reserve**

Place 2 slices cucumber in a cocktail shaker; add Frangelico and muddle for 10 seconds. Add coconut water, rum, and ice to fill; stir until chilled. Strain into a coupe glass or cocktail glass and garnish with remaining cucumber slice.

Eureka Punch

Makes 1 cocktail

Martin Cate of Smuggler's Cove in San Francisco combines Chartreuse and ginger ale in this refreshing tropical drink.

- **2 oz. Caribbean-style amber rum, such as Cruzan Single Barrel**
- **1 oz. fresh lemon juice**
- **¾ oz. yellow Chartreuse**
- **1 tbsp. honey mixed with 1 tbsp. water**

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1 dash Angostura bitters
2 oz. ginger ale
1 lemon wedge, to garnish
1 sprig mint, to garnish

Combine rum, juice, Chartreuse, honey mixture, and bitters in a cocktail shaker and fill with ice; shake until chilled. Strain into a collins glass filled with ice cubes and top with ginger ale; garnish with lemon and mint.

Flamingo

Makes 1 cocktail

Meehan created this alternative to rum and Coke, utilizing lighter, brighter grapefruit soda, which lets the bold character of a pot-distilled English-style rum shine through.

2 oz. English-style white rum, such as Banks 5 Island or Mount Gay Special Reserve
¾ oz. fresh lime juice
3 oz. pink grapefruit soda, such as Izze
1 crosswise slice lime

Combine rum and juice in a cocktail shaker and fill with ice; shake until chilled. Strain into a rocks glass and fill with ice; add soda and garnish with lime.

Mai Tai

Makes 1 cocktail

"Trader Vic" Bergeron came up with this floral drink to showcase a 17-year-old gold Jamaican rum. Once all his bottles were gone, he recreated the drink's complex flavor by layering two very different rums in the same drink.

1 oz. dark Jamaican rum, such as Appleton
1 oz. Martinique *rhum agricole vieux,* such as Clément V.S.O.P.
1 oz. fresh lime juice, spent lime half reserved
½ oz. orange Curaçao
¼ oz. orgeat syrup (see page 118)
¼ oz. simple syrup
1 sprig mint

Combine all ingredients, except lime rind and mint, in a cocktail shaker and fill with ice; shake until chilled. Pour, unstrained, into a double old-fashioned glass and sink reserved lime half in glass; garnish with mint.

The Naked Ape

Makes 1 cocktail

Pot-still Jamaican rum is redolent of ripe banana, so it's a natural combination with banana liqueur. Cinnamon syrup gives the drink a spicy depth.

1½ oz. Jamaican dark rum, such as Coruba
½ oz. Jamaican gold rum, such as Smith & Cross
½ oz. fresh lemon juice
½ oz. cinnamon syrup, such as Trader Tiki's or Sonoma Syrup Co. (see page 118)
½ oz. banana liqueur
1 dash Angostura bitters

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker and fill with ice; shake until chilled. Strain into a rocks glass and fill with ice.

Petit Punch Vieux

Makes 1 cocktail

Benjamin Jones of Clément rum distillery in Martinique shared his recipe for this cool, bracing cocktail, his country's national drink.

2 lime wedges
2 oz. Martinique *rhum agricole vieux,* such as Clément V.S.O.P. or La Favorite
½ oz. cane syrup, such as Petite Canne (see page 112)

Squeeze juice from wedges into an old-fashioned glass and add one spent wedge to glass; rub rim of glass with second spent wedge and then discard. Add rum, syrup, and ice to fill; stir until chilled.

Zombie

Makes 1 cocktail

Donn Beach set a limit of two per customer for this potent drink, made with three kinds of rum, citrus, and spice.

2 oz. Spanish-style *ron añejo,* such as Flor De Caña 7-year
1½ oz. gold Jamaican rum, such as Appleton
1 oz. 151-proof Demerara rum, such as Lemon Hart
¾ oz. fresh lime juice
½ oz. falernum (see page 118)
¾ cup crushed ice
2 tsp. fresh white grapefruit juice
1 tsp. cinnamon syrup, such as Trader Tiki or Sonoma Syrup Co. (see page 118)
1 tsp. grenadine
⅛ tsp. Pernod or other anise liqueur
1 dash Angostura bitters
1 sprig mint, to garnish

Combine all ingredients, except mint, in a blender and blend on high for 5 seconds; pour into a chimney glass or highball glass, add more ice to fill, and garnish with mint.



SEASON OF PLENTY

From remote mountain forests to bustling urban markets, in China's Yunnan Province, mushrooms are foraged treasure

by BETH KRACKLAUER photography by ARIANA LINDQUIST

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Mushroom-infused oil (see page 66 for recipe); facing page: In Xitu, Sha Wenhua holds *song rong* mushrooms from the Shaxi Valley.

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IT WAS THE HEIGHT *of fora*

LAST SUMMER I VISITED A restaurant called Delicious Fragrant Mushroom Found Between Mountain Mushroom Bamboo Garden—or, in Mandarin, *Shan Jian Ling Xiang Jun Zhuyuan*. I was in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, in southwestern China. It was the height of the foraging season in perhaps the best place on Earth for finding and eating mushrooms. At the front of the restaurant there was a glass case displaying the various fungi on offer that evening. Some I recognized: porcini, with their bulbous heads the color of café au lait; ruffled, apricot-colored chanterelles. Others were unfamiliar, even fantastic: a mushroom the color of tobacco, with a parasol top and curlicue stem; another with a poisonous-looking green head; a funguslike coral, its clusters of delicate forked fingers tinged pink at the ends; and a phallic thing seven or eight inches long, with a lobed brainlike gray head, from which there hung a lacy white veil.



Upstairs, in a small private dining room, this last specimen, called bamboo mushroom, or *zhusun jun*, was served simply, almost reverentially, quick-sautéed with no seasoning at all—nothing to interfere with its earthy flavor. The texture was silky, with a slight crunch; the honeycombed head and lacy veil were like very fragile tripe. "This is one you can enjoy with your mouth, your eyes, and your belly," said Yuan Wenshou, the restaurant's owner.

His friend, the gregarious Dr. Dequn Zhou, a mycologist at Kunming University of Science and Technology, kept the conversation flowing while Yuan poured out tiny cups of truffle-infused corn wine. A parade of mushroom dishes continued to appear, including a fried rice made with *meiwei niugan*, or delicious cow's liver mushrooms—known in the West as porcini or cèpes. Zhou called the mushroom by its botanical name, *Boletus edulis*, and explained that it's one of Yunnan's most valuable mushroom exports, largely because no one's figured out how to cultivate it. With a wry smile, he remarked, "Unfortunately, we cannot cultivate Boletus. Fortunately, we cannot cultivate Boletus."

But the main attraction was the mushroom hot pot bubbling away at the center of the table, its broth enriched with some 40 species of mushrooms. Every so often a young woman would appear to add a different fresh mushroom to the pot; every time she ladled some into our bowls, it had been transformed into a new, more intensely concentrated soup. Yuan explained that his was one of the oldest mushroom hot pot restaurants in town—that is, it's been in business for a decade now. It turns out that the kind of elaborate hot pot meal we'd sat down to is a recent development, a product of the mushroom boom that's transformed life in Yunnan over the past 20 years. This meal was a tribute to the almighty mushroom.

The following morning at Kunming's main mushroom market, a sprawling covered arcade redolent of the pheromone scent of wild fungus, dozens upon dozens of mushroom entrepreneurs hawked their foraged treasures. A few of them dealt in other foraged specialties of Yunnan, as well—edible flowers, hunks of honeycomb alive with wriggling larvae—but otherwise the market was given over entirely to mushrooms. "More than 800 varieties of edible mushroom grow in Yunnan," said Zhou Yuankuang, secretary general of the Yunnan Mushroom Association, as he walked me through the workings of the local trade. "It is

ging season in perhaps THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH *for eating mushrooms*

one of the most biodiverse places in the world."

He explained that every day, between two and three in the morning, mushrooms arrive from all over the province. Large-scale dealers and exporters operate independently of the mushroom market, buying in quantity in county seats around Yunnan and taking the mushrooms back to Kunming or transporting them by airplane directly to other parts of China and to Japan, Italy, France, and the United States. Annually, mushroom exports earn dealers in Yunnan more than 650 million yuan ($100 million); sales to the rest of China bring in another 3 billion yuan ($450 million).

Later I pondered all this over lunch at Huoche Nanzhan 1910, or 1910 South Railway Station restaurant. The dishes here were, I was told, more-traditional Yunnan fare: chewy wood ear mushrooms in a tangy, chile-hot salad; Boletus sliced thin and stir-fried with hot-sweet green lantern pepper. There were also mushrooms that aren't typically exported but are beloved within Yunnan: deeply umami *jicong* ("chicken-taste") mushroom, julienned and sautéed and piled onto a silken savory egg custard; blue-black *ganba*, shredded and fried to intensify its powerful, sinus-clearing evergreen fragrance.

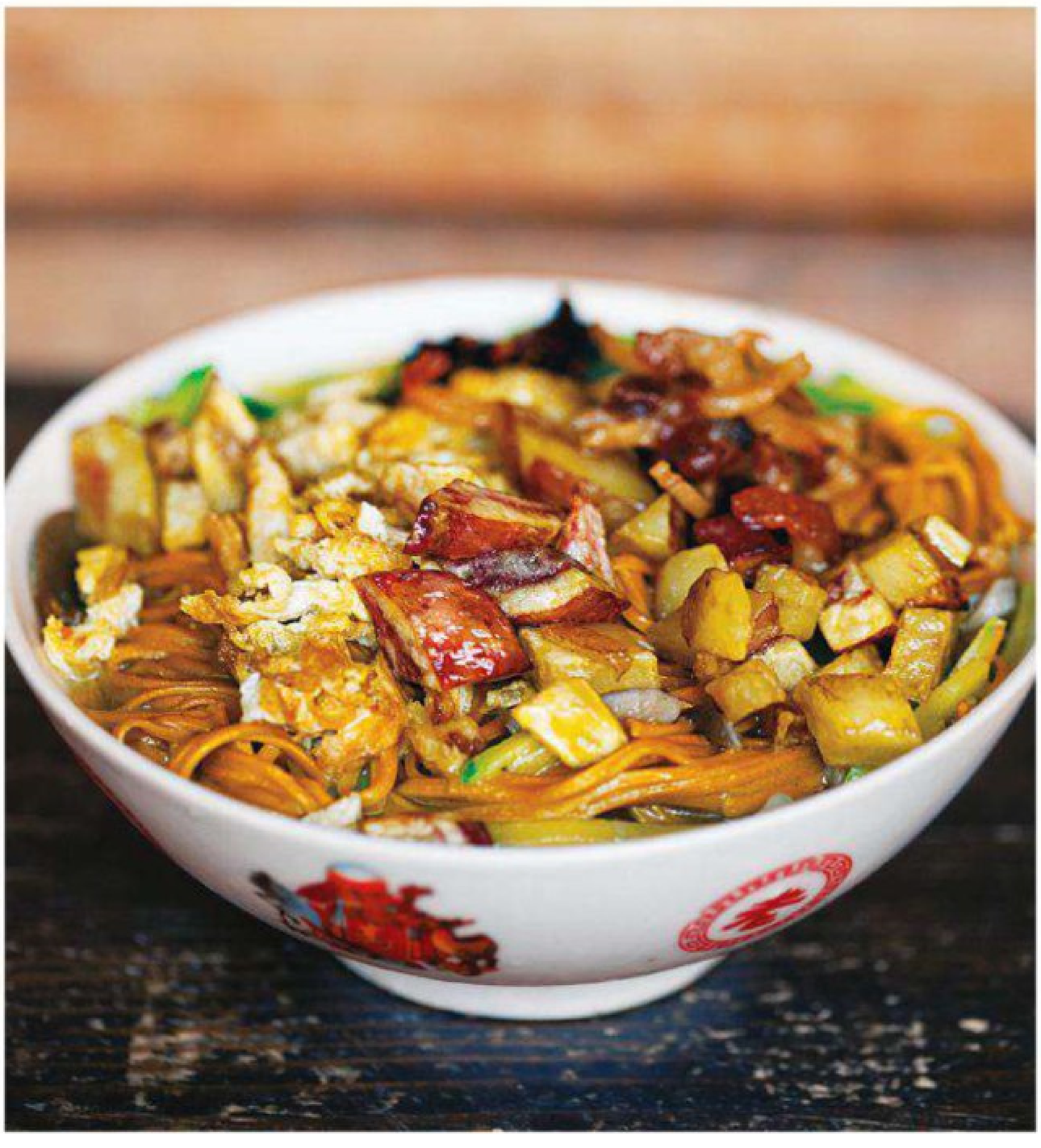
I thought about the far-off corners of Yunnan these mushrooms had come from. I imagined cool pine forests, and the people foraging there, and how they might cook what they'd found. I wanted to know what these mushrooms would taste like freshly plucked from the earth.

YUNNAN IS A SINGULARLY DIVERSE place, not only biologically but also in terms of climate, topography, and culture. The province borders Tibet, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guanxi, and the countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Burma. In Yunnan's tropical lowlands, you'll find peacocks and elephants; not so far away but considerably higher in elevation, in the foothills of the Himalayas, yaks roam the snowy mountainsides. A full third of China's ethnic minorities lives in Yunnan, 25 different groups in all, each with its own language and customs.

My next destination seemed about 200 years from Kunming, along the old Tea Horse Road that was once the main trade route between China and Tibet. The Shaxi Valley lies in northwest Yunnan Province, a protracted 56-mile drive from the nearest airport along a rocky road that hugs the edges of sheer cliff faces for much of the distance. Along the way, Wu Yunxin, a local guide who'd picked me up in his Volkswagen Jetta, pointed out signs of a highway under construction that promises to bring the world to his doorstep.

Wu lives in a small farming village called Duan Jia Deng, nestled in the valley's fertile bottomland between two pine-forested mountains, in an area populated primarily by people of the Bai ethnic minority. For the last few years, Wu has run a guesthouse with his wife, Duan Jan Pin; a trickle of tourists, mostly Europeans, Americans, and Australians, has begun to find its way to Shaxi, drawn by the area's natural beauty and the opportunity to see a way of life in China that's fast disappearing.

At this time of year, foragers set out from the village each morning at sunrise to collect mushrooms. They ascend the eastern mountain, because that's where the best quality *song rong* are to be found. This is the mushroom the Japanese call matsutake and value above all *(continued on page 60)*



Mushroom noodle soup (see page 66 for a recipe); facing page: a Yi woman in the village of Xitu.

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FRUITS OF THE FOREST

Mountainous and remote, Yunnan Province has been spared some of the human and environmental pressures that have wiped out native mushroom species in other places. It is one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, home to some 700 endemic flowering plant species; 40 percent of China's medicinal herbs; animals ranging from China's last herd of Asian elephants to wild Tibetan yaks; and more than 800 varieties of edible mushroom, of which the following represent only the tiniest sample. Many of these grow in forests in North America as well; if there is a forager at your local farmers' market, you might come across them. Others can be found in dried form in Asian grocery stores. —*B.K.*

① The ***ganba***, or dried beef mushroom (*Thelephora ganba jun*), like many mushrooms in China, takes its name from another food it is thought to resemble. It is deeply savory with a pleasantly chewy texture. This species is found only in sandy soils under pine trees, and only in Yunnan. It has a pungent aroma and flavor, like concentrated pine, and is typically served shredded and fried. ② The spectacular ***zhusun***, or bamboo mushroom (*Phallus indusiatus*), grows in tropical bamboo forests. Available fresh in Yunnan and other parts of China, it can sometimes be found in dried form in Asian markets in North America. Its wrinkled head and veil-like net bring a satisfying, almost tripe-like texture to stir-fries and soups. ③ Less pungent than its cousin the black truffle, the summer truffle, or ***xia kuai*** (*Tuber aestivum*), was not very highly valued in China until the 1990s, when foreign buyers drove up the price. Because cooking can dissipate its delicate flavor, it's best used raw, thinly shaved over rice dishes, potatoes, or eggs. ④ ***Song rong***, or pine mushroom (*Tricholoma matsutake*), is the same mushroom that's called *matsutake* in Japan, where it commands prices as high as $1000 per pound. The most prized specimens are young, between four and seven inches long, with tight round caps; these will have a very strong, cinnamon-spicy fragrance and a dense, meaty texture. ⑤ A cousin of the highly prized *porcino* (*Boletus edulis*), the ***huigai niugan***, or gray Bolete mushroom (*Boletus griseus*), has a pleasant mild flavor and a Bolete's meaty texture when stir-fried. ⑥ Leccinum species, such as ***yuandong liubing niugan*** (*Leccinum extremiorientale*), typically have soft flesh and, when mature, a distinctive scaly stem. Many believe that they are best eaten after drying, which intensifies their otherwise mild, earthy flavor. ⑦ The ***jicong***, or chicken-taste mushroom (*Termitomyces albuminosus*)—known as the termite mushroom in other parts of the world—grows on termite mounds, where it is actually cultivated by termites because it converts wood material that they are unable to digest into sugars. Its flavor is often compared to that of chicken (hence the name); in Yunnan, it's stir-fried with the region's famous ham or added to soups for savory depth. ⑧ This beautiful, two-tone fungus, ***shuangse niugan***, or two-colored cow's liver mushroom (*Boletus bicolor*), is another relative of the delectable *porcino*. It has a similar savory flavor and brings stunning red color to all kinds of dishes. ⑨ It looks more like an undersea creature than a forest fungus, hence the name: rosso coral, or ***shuaba*** mushroom (*Ramaria botrytis*). Quick-sautéeing preserves its mild, fruity flavor and its extraordinary, delicately crunchy, cauliflower-like texture. ⑩ The ***naijiang***, or weeping milk cap mushroom (*Lactarius volemus*), gets its name from the milky sap it exudes when its gills are damaged. It's also called fishy milk cap, for its pronounced fishy smell—though it's worth noting that the flavor isn't fishy at all, but mild and sweet. ⑪ Often found growing beside forest paths in late summer and early fall, the ***qingtou***, or green head mushroom (*Russula virescens*), has a gorgeous sea-green head crisscrossed with fissures that give it a mosaic appearance. Its nutty flavor is enhanced by roasting or toasting. ⑫ Like other Lactarius species, ***meiwui rugu***, or saffron milk cap mushroom (*Lactarius deliciosus*), benefits from long cooking—in a stew, say—to render its slightly grainy texture luscious. It releases the same sap as its Lactarius relatives, which adds richness and thickness to sauces.



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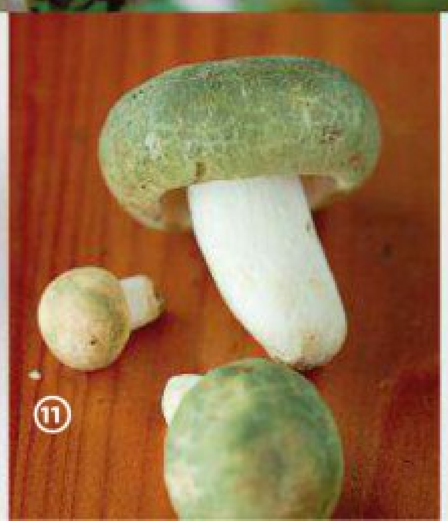
Duan Fu Yu gathers mushrooms in the Shaxi Valley.


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(continued from page 57) others. In the early 1990s, after Japanese harvests of the mushroom began to dwindle, "a whole new economy came into play here," Wu told me. "It changed people's lives. Families were making enough money from gathering mushrooms to build new houses."

As Wu led me up the mountain one morning, the combination of the near-vertical incline and high elevation had me gasping for breath. By the time we got up to the forested part of the mountain where the *song rong* grow, the foragers had been at it for hours. We stopped and listened. Wu called out, "Whoop!" No response. "They are very protective of their hunting grounds," he told me. He called out again, this time identifying himself. After a minute, we heard an answering call from within the trees.

Hacking through branches and brush, we finally came upon two women who looked to be in their 50s, with large baskets strapped to their backs. Their names were Duan Fu Yu and Cun Long Mei; Wu addressed them both as *aliang* (auntie). Duan Fu Yu allowed me to trail her as she moved through the trees, scanning the ground. Invariably, I was unable to see whatever it was that made her stop and gently push aside the pine needles at her feet; invariably, there would be mushrooms. "Today's a happy day for us," said Cun Long Mei. "We'll even fill

THE PINE-SCENTED *mushrooms were cooked* TO THE POINT WHERE *they were luscious but still firm*

the extra bags we brought." In addition to *song rong*, they'd collected termite mushrooms and a local variety called *huangpi huzhang*; they'd sell some of these mushrooms, but later they'd also trade with each other to make sure they both had enough of each kind for cooking. The *song rong*, however, they'd keep aside for selling. They were too valuable to eat.

Later that afternoon, on top of the mountain, we crossed a meadow dotted with edelweiss to reach a small settlement called Xitu, a collection of low-slung whitewashed houses with peaked tile roofs. Wu had spotted the donkey of a neighbor from his village tied up nearby. Yang Jia Ping is a mushroom buyer, and he'd climbed the steep and narrow mountain trail, leading his donkey behind him, to survey the haul brought in that day by the family that lives there.

The family, named Sha, is, like many of the people who live up this mountain, ethnically Yi. Inside one of the houses, it took a few moments for my eyes to adjust to the dark. In the center of the room was a wood fire, and squatting and seated around it were a few men in Western-style dress and a couple of women in traditional Yi garb: embroidered head scarves and long tiered skirts in shades of yellow, fuchsia, and green. Everyone was watching in hushed anticipation as the mushroom buyer weighed out on his balance

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A vendor weighs *jicong* mushrooms at Kunming's mushroom market; facing page: stir-fried mushrooms with bacon, green chiles, and scallions (see page 66 for recipe); a pork and mushroom stir-fry at 1910 South Railway Station restaurant (see page 66 for recipe).



Duan Jan Pin prepares mushroom salad with chiles (see page 64 for a recipe) in the kitchen of her family home in Duan Jia Deng, a village in Shaxi Valley.

scale the *song rong* the women had gathered. A man handed me a glass of hot tea and a potato dug out of the embers of the fire. Suddenly I realized I was ravenous; the smoky flesh of the roasted potato tasted wonderful. An older woman in a winged black headdress stood in the doorway overseeing the transaction. When the buyer announced his price, she furrowed her brow, considering; the two younger women looked at each other, smiled, and accepted his terms.

Following Yang down the mountain, we could barely keep up, though the mushroom buyer was simultaneously smoking a cigarette, talking on his cell phone, and leading a donkey burdened with baskets of mushrooms. Within eight hours, the mushrooms in those baskets would be arriving in Kunming; within 48, some might be on display in supermarkets in Japan.

I WANTED TO KNOW how people in Shaxi used these mushrooms in the days before they became an international commodity and the centerpiece of grand hot pot feasts. The next afternoon, Wu's wife, Duan Jan Pin, agreed to show me. We were at the house where she grew up and her parents still live, along with her brother and his family. Duan washed the mushrooms and other vegetables under a spigot in the brick courtyard and chopped and prepped them out there, too. In the kitchen, she cooked everything in a massive cast-iron wok set over a wood fire.

There was sliced *song rong* stir-fried with bacon, green chile, and scallions. She cooked the pine-scented mushrooms just to the point where they were luscious but still firm and had released some of their moisture, which reducd quickly to make a flavorful sauce. There was another stir-fry similar to the first, only with dried red chiles instead of fresh green ones, and meaty porcini instead of *song rong*, which made it a completely different dish. The umami flavors of the bacon and the mushrooms magnified each other exponentially. A whiff of wood smoke permeated everything.

There was a hot and sour, chile-flecked salad of sliced *huangpi huzhang* mushrooms that Duan boiled in the wok until they took on a satisfying firm and succulent texture. To make a soup she called "white wind mushroom noodle soup," she stepped into the garden and picked a young pumpkin, which she julienned into fine shards and cooked in a broth along with buckwheat noodles, lightly fried diced potatoes, bacon, chile, and scrambled egg. "Eat it right away," Duan said, "or the noodles will get soft." The potatoes and pumpkin released their starch to thicken the broth, and a dollop of red chile paste added color and heat.

Finally, Duan cooked *jicong* mushrooms in a quantity of bubbling oil along with dried red chile and Sichuan peppercorns. Once it was cool, she poured some of the infused oil into a jar for me to take home. "You can keep this in your kitchen and put a little in soups or noodles dishes," she said. A perfect souvenir of Shaxi: the essence of those mushrooms, captured and concentrated.

The Guide Yunnan, China

WHERE TO STAY

Grand Park Kunming *20 Hong Hua Qiao, Kunming (86/871/538-6688; parkhotelgroup.com). $212 double.* This modern hotel has 300 well-appointed rooms, many of them with spectacular views of the city and surrounding mountains.

Dragonfly Guesthouse *1 Duan Jia Deng Village, Shaxi (86/135/7785-1712; teahorse.net). $23 double.* Set in a small farming village, this guesthouse provides a glimpse of rural life in southwestern China. Owner Wu Yunxin speaks fluent English and is a savvy guide; his wife, Duan Jan Pin, prepares delicious regional dishes.

Laomadian Lodge *Sideng Street, Shaxi Old Town (86/872/472-2666). $67 double.* This beautifully restored inn was once a stop for traders traveling on horseback between Tibet and China. Proprietor Hwang Eufung and chef Yang Jing provide top-notch meals made with ingredients from the nearby Friday market, a dazzling weekly spread of local foods that is absolutely worth a visit.



MAP: THE M FACTORY

WHERE TO EAT

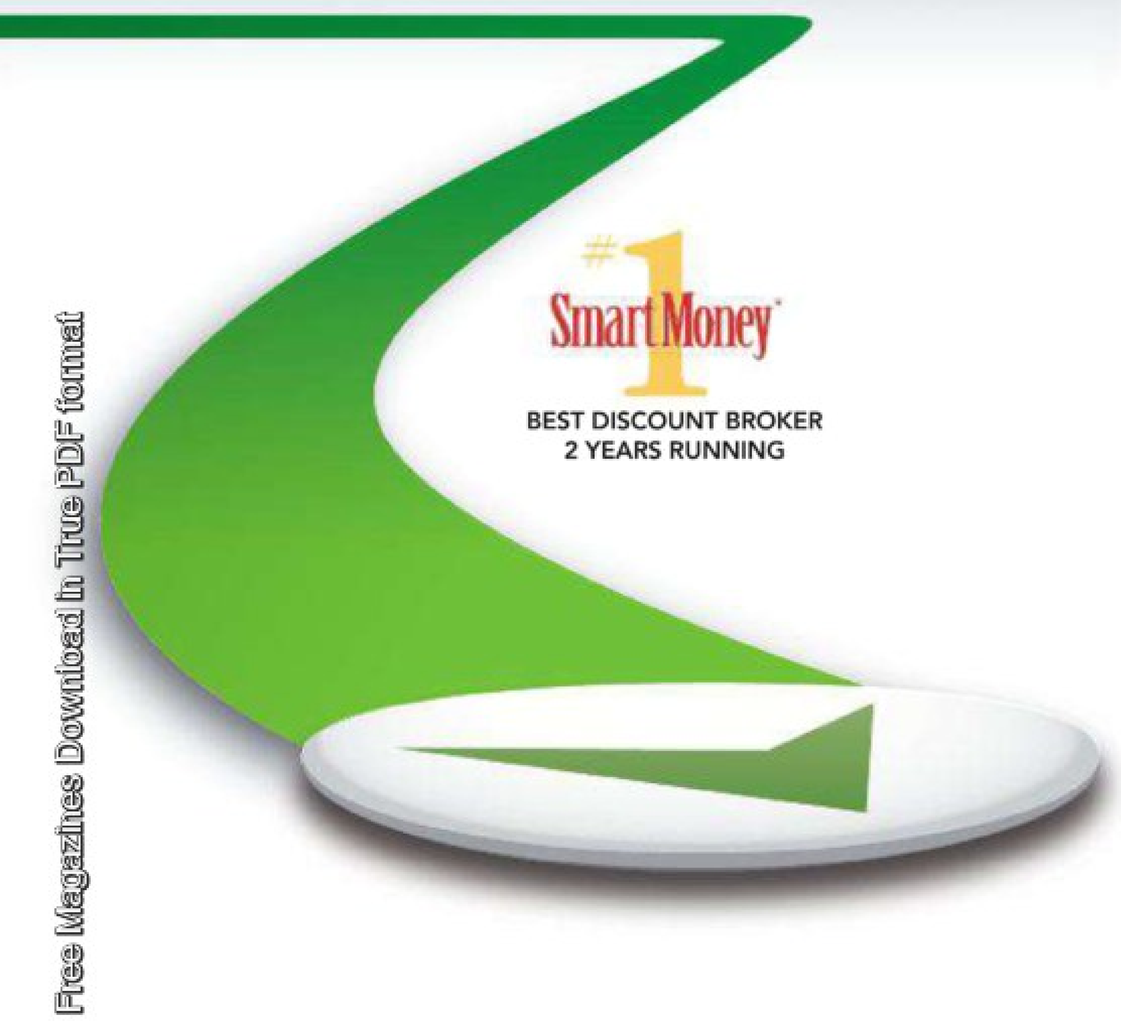
1910 South Railway Station *8 Houxin Jie, Kunming (86/871/316-9486).* Sample dishes featuring Yunnan's famous mushrooms, such as pungent *ganba* fried with red chile.

Shan Jian Ling Xiang Jun Zhuyuan *9 Guangping Road, Guangshan, Kunming (86/871/715-9455).* One of Kunming's oldest mushroom hot pot restaurants and a wonderful place to experience this ritual, in which foraged fungi are cooked at the table in a rich mushroom broth.

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Clockwise from top left: wood ear mushroom salad with edamame (see page 66 for recipe); savory mushroom and pork custard (see recipe at right); chicken stir-fry with chanterelles (see recipe below); clay pot chicken with chanterelles (see recipe below).

Jiyou Jun Bao Ji

(Clay-Pot Chicken with Chanterelles)

Serves 2–4

Though this sumptuous stew (pictured above) is traditionally braised in a clay pot, we found a Dutch oven works very well.

FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE:

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro
- 2 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 2 tsp. minced ginger
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper

FOR THE CHICKEN:

- 8 oz. chanterelle mushrooms, halved
- 4 oz. country ham, cut into ¼" matchsticks
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 1 tbsp. dry sherry
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 scallions, cut into 2" pieces
- 2 whole chicken legs, separated
- 1 serrano chile, stemmed and halved lengthwise
- 1 1" piece ginger, thinly sliced
- 1 dried chile de árbol, stemmed and crushed
- Cooked rice, for serving

1 Make the dipping sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce, cilantro, sesame oil, ginger, and pepper; set sauce aside.

2 Place chanterelles, ham, stock, sherry, sugar, garlic, scallions, chicken, serrano, ginger, and chile de árbol in a 4-qt. Dutch oven, and then bring to a boil over medium heat; reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, covered and stirring occasionally, until chicken is tender, about 45 minutes. Serve stew with rice and dipping sauce.

Jiyou Jun Chao Ji

(Chicken Stir-Fry with Chanterelles)

Serves 4

The chicken in this stir-fry (pictured above) is coated in a mixture of egg white and cornstarch before cooking—a technique called velveting (see "Smooth Move," page 114)—to preserve its succulence.

FOR THE SAUCE:

- ¼ cup chicken stock
- 1½ tbsp. dry sherry
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- ½ tsp. sugar
- ¼ tsp. rice vinegar
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper

FOR THE STIR-FRY:

- 12 oz. boneless skinless chicken breast, very thinly sliced
- 1½ tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. dry sherry
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground white pepper
- 1 egg white
- 3 cups peanut oil, for frying
- 12 oz. chanterelle mushrooms, thickly sliced
- 3 scallions, cut into ½" pieces
- 3 dried chiles de árbol
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 1" piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- ½ tsp. toasted sesame oil
- Cooked rice, for serving

1 Make the sauce: Whisk together stock, sherry, cornstarch, sugar, vinegar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl; set aside.

2 In a medium bowl, toss together chicken, cornstarch, sherry, salt, pepper, and egg white; let sit for 30 minutes, and then drain. Heat oil in a 14" flat-bottomed wok or high-sided skillet over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 300°; add chicken and fry, stirring gently and constantly, until it turns white and is cooked through, about 45 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, transfer chicken to a large colander and set over a bowl to drain. Heat oil to 350°; add chanterelles to oil and fry, stirring often, until barely soft, about 30 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to colander with chicken to drain; set aside.

3 Discard all but 1 tbsp. oil, and return wok to high heat; add scallions, chiles, garlic, and ginger, and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 10 seconds. Add sauce and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 20 seconds. Return chicken and chanterelles to wok and toss with sauce until well coated. Transfer to a serving platter, drizzle with sesame oil, and serve with rice.

Liang Ban

(Mushroom Salad with Chiles)

Serves 4

Mushrooms, boiled until firm and succulent, are tossed with a dressing of chiles and sesame oil for this spicy salad (pictured on page 62).

- 14 dried chiles de árbol (about ¼ oz.), stemmed
- 2 tbsp. minced scallions
- 2 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp. soy sauce
- 12 large shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt, plus more to taste

1 Working in batches, place chiles in a spice grinder and process until finely ground. Transfer to a medium bowl and stir in scallions, oil, vinegar, and soy sauce to form a thick sauce; set sauce aside.

2 Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil over high heat; add mushrooms and cook until lightly chewy, about 5 minutes. Drain mushrooms and transfer to a kitchen towel; squeeze out as much liquid as possible. Transfer mushrooms to bowl with sauce and toss until evenly coated. Let sit 10 minutes before serving.

Meiwei Mogu Naiyou Dong Zhurou

(Savory Mushroom and Pork Custard)

Serves 4–6

This steamed egg custard (pictured at left) is studded with gingery pork meatballs and topped with crisp-fried chanterelles.

- 4 oz. ground pork
- 2 tsp. minced fresh ginger
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. peanut oil, plus more
- 4 fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and thinly sliced
- 10 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup chicken stock
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 6 oz. chanterelle mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame seeds
- 2 red Thai chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil

1 Combine pork, ginger, and 1 tsp. salt in a bowl; form mixture into about nine 1" meatballs. Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat; add meatballs and cook, turning, until browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer meatballs to a 2-qt., 9"-diameter round baking dish or heatproof bowl and scatter shiitake mushrooms over top. In a bowl, whisk eggs, stock, and salt and pepper; pour over meatballs and shiitakes; sprinkle ¾ of the scallions over top.

2 Pour water to a depth of 1" into an 8-qt. Dutch oven and bring to a boil over high heat; reduce heat to medium and place a rack or steamer basket in bottom of pot. Place baking dish inside pot and cover pot with lid. Cook for 20 minutes, and

TODD COLEMAN (5)

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then turn off heat and let sit, covered, until custard is completely set, about 15 minutes more.

3 Meanwhile, pour peanut oil to a depth of 2" in a 6-qt. Dutch oven; heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Add chanterelle mushrooms and fry, until crispy, about 1 minute; transfer to paper towels to drain.

4 To serve, scatter remaining scallions, fried chanterelle mushrooms, sesame seeds, and chiles over custard and drizzle with sesame oil. Spoon out onto individual plates.

Mo Gu Miantiao Tang

(Mushroom Noodle Soup)

Serves 8

A base of homemade chicken stock makes the broth for this soup (pictured on page 57) luxuriously rich.

FOR THE STOCK:

- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 lb. chicken wings
- 4 scallions, cut into 1" pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 2" piece ginger, thinly sliced
- 10 dried shiitake mushrooms

FOR THE SOUP:

- 8 oz. slab bacon, cut into ¼" matchsticks
- 4 scallions, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 3" piece ginger, minced
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 lb. Chinese egg noodles (see page 118)
- 1 cup canola oil
- 3 red-skinned potatoes, cut into ½" cubes
- ½ mirliton (chayote squash), cut into ¼" matchsticks
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- Asian chile paste, such as sambal oelek, for serving

1 Make the stock: Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; brown wings, about 8 minutes. Add scallions, garlic, ginger, and 12 cups water and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until chicken falls off the bone, about 1 hour. Pour broth through a fine strainer, discard solids, and set broth aside. Meanwhile, place mushrooms in a large bowl and pour over 4 cups boiling water; let sit until softened, about 15 minutes. Drain mushrooms, reserving soaking liquid, and discard solids. Finely chop mushrooms; set aside.

2 Make the soup: Return saucepan to medium-high heat; add bacon and cook, stirring, until crisp, 14–16 minutes. Add scallions, garlic, and ginger, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 8 minutes. Add mushrooms, and cook until liquid is evaporated, about 6 minutes. Add reserved broth and mushroom soaking liquid; bring to a boil; add noodles and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente, about 7 minutes. Stir in soy sauce and vinegar; keep warm.

3 Heat oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat; working in batches, add potatoes and fry until lightly browned and cooked through, about 10 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain and set aside. Add mirlitons to oil and fry until soft, about 30 seconds; transfer to paper towels to drain and set aside. Drain off all but 2 tbsp. of oil, and return to medium heat. Add eggs and swirl skillet to make an omelette; cook, turning once, until just cooked through, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board, roll up omelette like a cigar, and cut crosswise into ¼"-thick strips.

4 To serve, divide noodle soup among 8 large serving bowls and top each with potatoes, mirliton, and egg strips. Serve with chile paste.

Mu'er Maodou Shala

(Wood Ear Mushroom Salad with Edamame)

Serves 4

This tangy salad (pictured on page 64) brightens mild, delicately crunchy wood ear mushrooms with chiles and lime.

- 1 oz. dried mushrooms, preferably woodear (see page 118)
- ½ cup fresh or frozen edamame
- ½ cup thinly sliced cilantro
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 serrano chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- ½ tsp. toasted sesame oil

1 Place mushrooms in a bowl and pour over 8 cups boiling water; let sit until soft, about 45 minutes. Drain mushrooms; tear into large bite-size pieces. Transfer to a large bowl and toss with edamame, ¾ of the cilantro, garlic, chiles, and scallions; set salad aside.

2 In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, soy, and sesame oil until smooth; toss with salad. Divide salad between bowls and garnish with remaining cilantro.

Xiang Gu You

(Mushroom-Infused Oil)

Makes about 3 cups

This earthy mushroom-infused oil (pictured on page 55) is delicious drizzled over soups, noodle dishes, eggs, salads, and more.

- 3 cups canola oil
- 3 tbsp. black peppercorns
- 7 dried chiles de árbol, stemmed
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 3 shiitake mushrooms, sliced

Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 320°; add peppercorns, chiles, and salt, and fry until fragrant and chiles are toasted, about 1 minute. Remove from heat, add mushrooms, and let cool; pour into a 1-qt. glass jar with a lid and store in refrigerator.

Xiaochao Niugan Jun

(Stir-Fried Mushrooms with Bacon, Green Chiles, and Scallions)

Serves 2

Duan Jan Pin, a cook in northwest Yunnan, makes this stir-fry (pictured on page 60) with *song rong* mushrooms, but firm cremini are a fine substitute.

- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 3 oz. slab bacon, cut into ⅛" matchsticks
- 10 oz. cremini mushrooms (about 16), thinly sliced
- 2 green Thai chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced
- 4 scallions, cut into ½" pieces
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Cooked rice, for serving

Heat oil in a 14" flat-bottomed wok or high-sided skillet over high heat; add bacon, and cook, stirring often, until its fat renders and it is crisp, about 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and chiles, and cook, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms release their moisture and soften, about 4 minutes. Add scallions and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Season with salt and divide between two shallow serving bowls; serve with rice.

Zhurou Chao Mogu

(Pork and Mushroom Stir-Fry)

Serves 4

This recipe (pictured on page 60) combines tender pork with crisp peppers and succulent shiitake mushrooms in a satisfying stir-fry.

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 6 tbsp. chicken stock
- 3 tbsp. dry sherry
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1½ tbsp. oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- ¾ tsp. sugar

FOR THE STIR-FRY:

- 12 oz. pork tenderloin, very thinly sliced crosswise
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. dry sherry
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground white pepper
- 1 egg white
- 8 oz. shiitake mushrooms, thickly sliced
- ½ cup sliced water chestnuts
- 2 cubanelle peppers, seeded and cut into 1½" pieces
- 2 red bell peppers, seeded and cut into 1½" pieces
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1" piece ginger, minced
- Cooked rice, for serving

1 Make the sauce: Whisk together stock, sherry, soy sauce, oyster sauce, cornstarch, oil, and sugar in a small bowl; set aside.

2 In a bowl, toss together pork, cornstarch, sherry, salt, pepper, and egg white; let sit for 30 minutes, and then drain. Heat oil in a 14" wok or high-sided skillet over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 300°; add pork and fry, stirring gently constantly, until it turns white, about 45 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, transfer pork to a large colander set over a bowl to drain. Heat oil to 350°; add shiitakes, chestnuts, and both peppers to oil and fry, stirring often, until crisp–tender, about 30 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to colander with pork; set aside.

3 Discard all but 1 tbsp. oil, and return wok to high heat; add garlic and ginger, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 10 seconds. Add sauce and cook, stirring, until thickened, about 20 seconds. Return pork and vegetables to wok and toss until well coated. Transfer to a serving platter and serve with rice.

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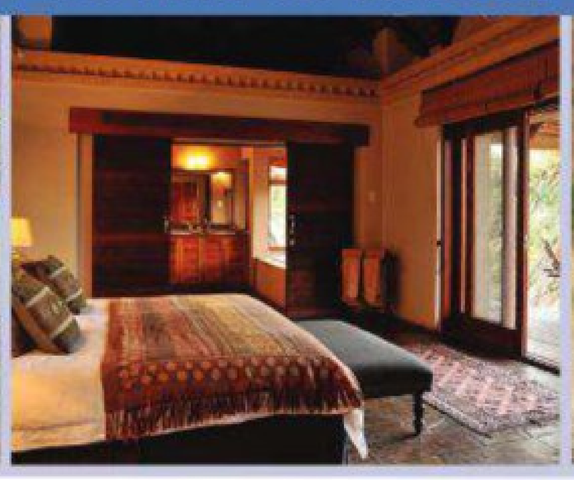


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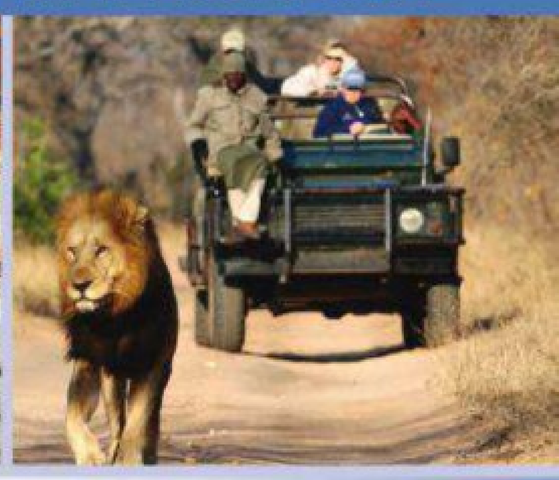
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Glorious Pesto

THIS CLASSIC LIGURIAN SAUCE IS A HALLMARK OF SUMMER COOKING

BY LAURA SCHENONE

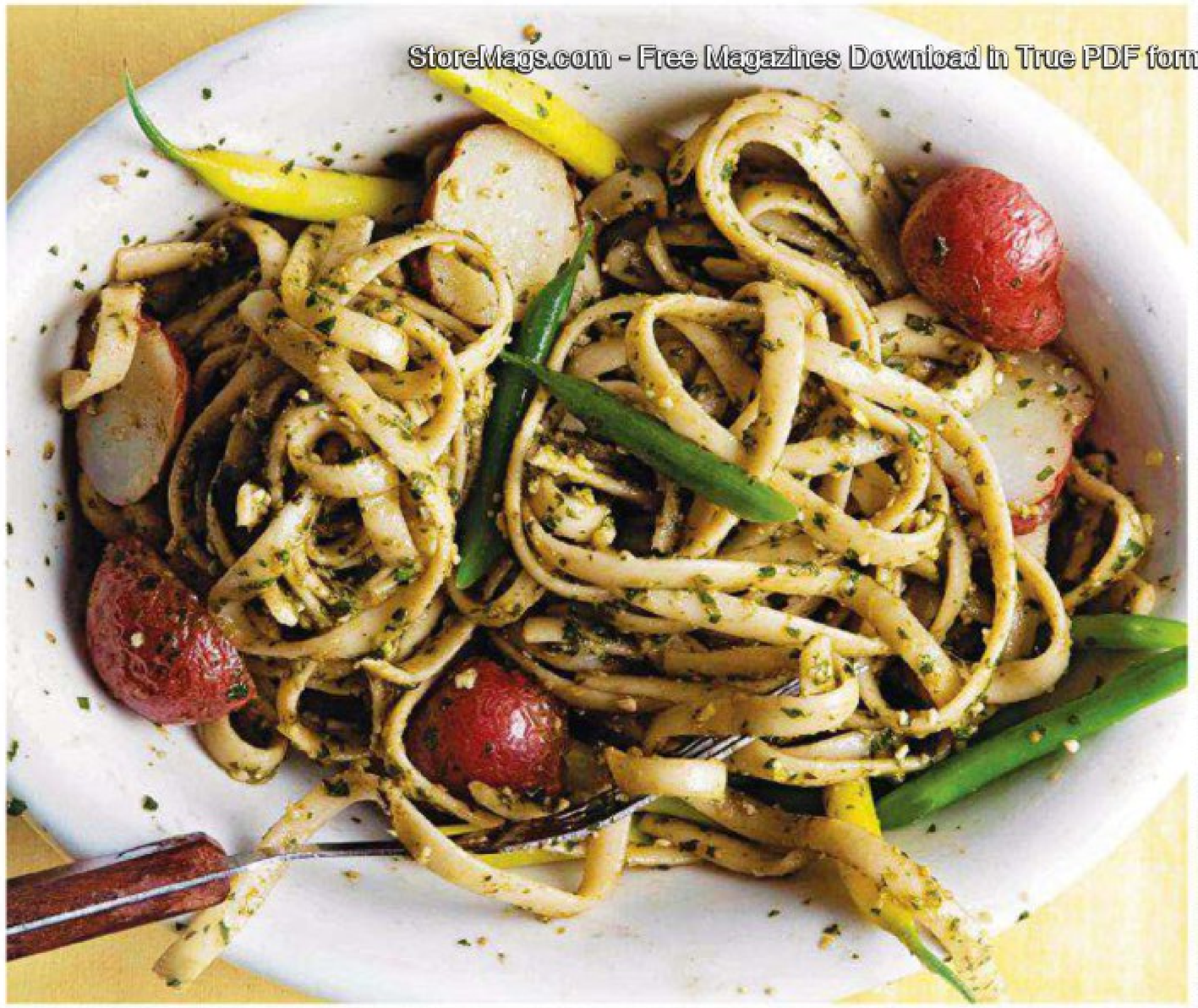




"WHAT IS PESTO?" MY FRIEND Sergio Rossi asks. He pauses for a moment and then answers his own question. "Pesto is the way a person makes pesto." ❧ It is a riddle for me to decipher as we head a few miles west from Genoa, Italy, to the town of Pra, to find Francesco "Lilli" Ratto, who has been farming here for 60 years. The 76-year-old producer beckons us into his greenhouse, and suddenly we're amid carpets of tender young basil, a sea of green. The air is filled with such intense perfume it's hard not to be overcome. ❧ For a long time now I've been captivated by Genoa, a medieval port city in the northwestern Italian region of Liguria. I love its ancient narrow streets and its inhabitants' curious French-sounding dialect. I love its traditions of pastas and sauces and vegetable pies called *torte*. And I love especially the road along the sea with its painted pastel buildings that lead to Recco, the village my great-grandmother left behind when she immigrated to America over a hundred years ago. Each time

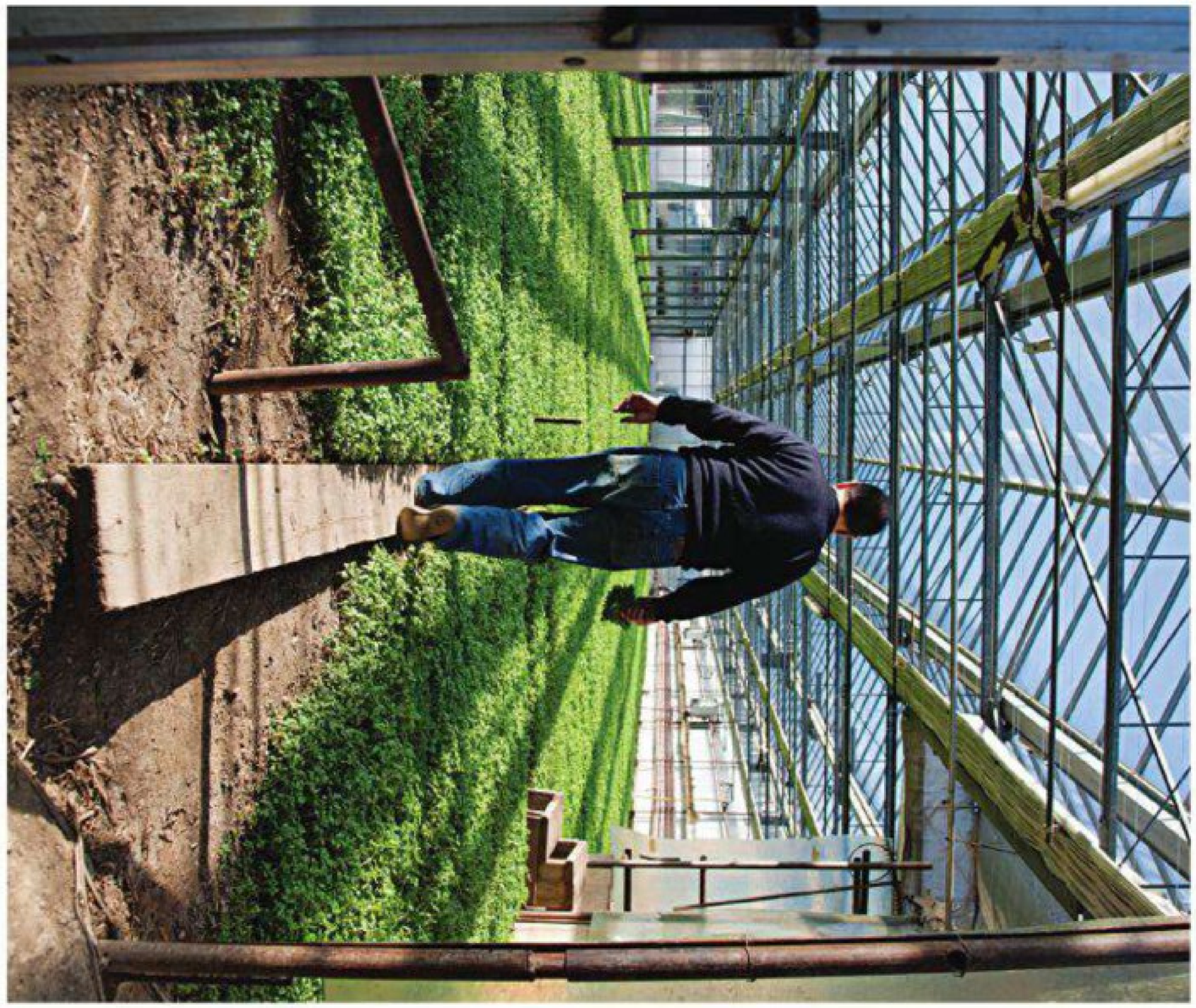
Top row, from left: pesto-rubbed chicken with *panzanella;* mature *basilico genovese* leaves; a greenhouse in Pra, Italy, where basil is grown for pesto. Bottom row: Enrichetta Trucco cleans basil leaves for pesto; *trenette al pesto* with string beans and potatoes; pesto focaccia. (See pages 82 and 83 for recipes.)

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD COLEMAN (2); PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; TODD COLEMAN (2); PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

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I visit, I seek out a few more of her recipes in an effort to reclaim a connection to this beautiful place.

This time my focus is pesto. More than a sauce, it's an icon of cultural identity here in Liguria. Just as historically wealthy Bologna has its decadent ragù, slowly simmered to sweetness with rich meat, milk, and wine, Liguria has its divinely aromatic *pesto genovese,* born of poverty and a resulting dependence on vegetables and gathered greens—uncooked, quick, meatless, economical. The word pesto comes from the verb *pestare,* which means to step on, or to pound, traditionally in a deep marble mortar using a wooden pestle. Today, the blender is the usual tool of choice, but for those of a certain age in Liguria, the mere sound of pestle striking mortar evokes memories of childhood.

I have no such memories. By the time my multiethnic branch sprouted from the family tree, we were Italian-Americans living in New Jersey, converted to meatballs and marinara. It wasn't until the late 1980s that I first encountered that herbaceous sauce, which—along with sun-dried tomatoes and goat cheese—marked a new American foodie consciousness (see "Pesto Goes Global," right). I slathered it recklessly on anything I could.

Though the sauce had traveled far, the Genoese technique of making it apparently had not. I knew that the minute I first tasted real pesto, tossed with fresh tagliatelle, in Liguria. I was astonished by the bright, light green color resembling spring peas, the creamy texture. The taste was not of garlic or oil, but a complex meeting of sweet, salt, and pungent. I felt blessed to know that this glorious dish and I could be even distantly related. And I desperately wanted to learn how to make pesto this good at home.

In theory, it shouldn't be hard. *Pesto genovese* has only six ingredients: basil, pine nuts, garlic, salt, cheese, and olive oil (see "Elements of Pesto," page 74). Yet, like most iconic recipes, this sauce is subject to great debate. How much garlic? How much salt? Which cheese? Should there be visible bits and pieces of basil, or should all of it be pulverized until smooth? The only thing everyone seems to agree upon is that delicate *basilico giovane,* or young basil, is best, which is why Sergio insisted we begin our exploration of Liguria's famous sauce in Pra, where the most coveted basil for pesto is grown.

In his greenhouse, Lilli reaches down with his beat-up farmers' hands and plucks a tiny basil plant for me to see. "It should have between four and six leaves," he explains. "Six are ideal." Then he pulls up about 30 such plants, each with pale green, teaspoon-size leaves, and gathers them at their roots in a bouquet. He wraps them in paper with the logo of Pra—ready for market. To Americans, who generally grow big bushy basil plants in full sun, raiding the leaves all summer long, this method of pulling up teeny basil plants may seem a bit radical. (See "Grow Your Own," page 78.) But this is how basil has been grown in Liguria for nearly a century, ever since greenhouse technology made it possible for cooks to buy tender young herbs year-round.

I asked Sergio, a local food historian from the Ligurian village of Montaggio, to be my guide on this trip because he knows more about pesto than anyone I have ever met. Shortly after we became friends in 2005, he told me, "Pesto runs through my veins." I believe it. Sergio grew up in his grandparents' restaurant, then spent decades working in the family's Genoa food shop, cooking alongside his mother, who made endless batches of pesto, day after day, to sell to busy home cooks.

In his brief book *Alle Radici del Pesto Genovese (The Roots of Genoese Pesto;* Nova Scripta, 2008), Sergio uses old documents to chart the evolution of pesto from its origins in the 16th century as a vinegar-spiked basil sauce for dressing eggplant to what most people say is the pesto's first recorded recipe, in 1863. He recently unearthed an even earlier verion in a 1618 journal entry from a gentleman in Asti (not far from Liguria's border) who writes of macaroni served with an oil-based sauce of garlic, basil, and cheese—dating pesto even further back than previously known.

Pesto's origins most likely intersect with the many pesto-like sauces found throughout the Mediterranean and beyond: After all, the mortar and pestle is one of the oldest and most ubiquitous cooking tools. The ancient Romans loved their pounded sauces of lovage, parsley, mint, and thyme, and many books about pesto say that it's descended from an old Persian sauce that's made with walnuts and thyme. The Greeks invented *skordalia* from ground garlic and nuts, and the Spanish have their *romesco* based on purées of almonds, garlic, red peppers, and olive oil. Even within Italy, there are various pestos, including a Sicilian version that incorporates *(continued on page 76)*

Laura Schenone *is the author of* The Lost Ravioli Recipes of Hoboken *(W.W. Norton and Co., 2008) and* A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove *(W.W. Norton and Co., 2004).*

***Gnocchi al pesto,* a classic Ligurian dish (see page 82 for a recipe).**

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

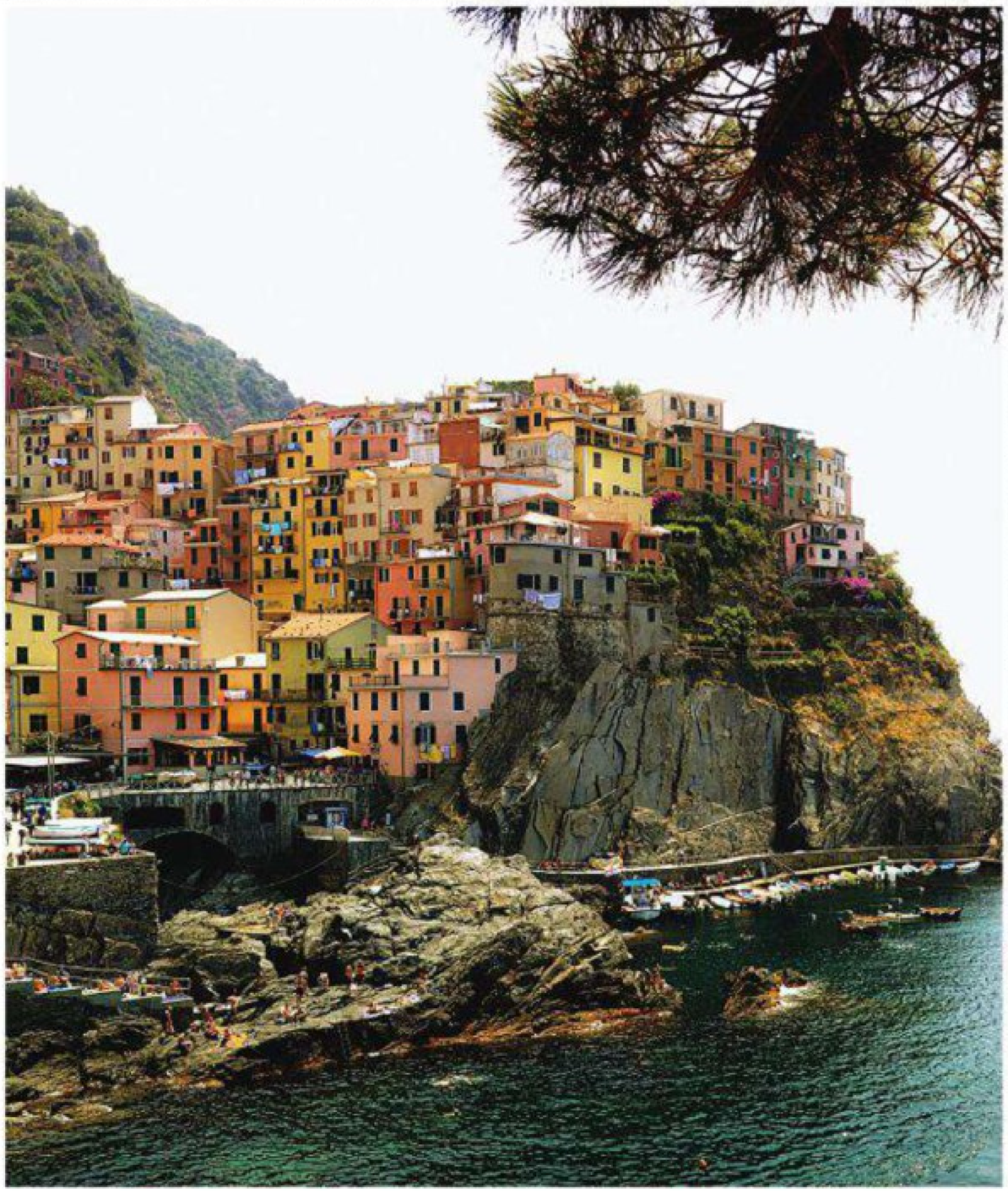
Pesto *Goes* Global

FROM REGIONAL SPECIALITY TO INTERNATIONAL ICON

From its humble beginnings in Liguria, pesto has gone far: not only can you find it in jarred form all around the world, but it's used to flavor everything from pizzas to fast-food sandwiches to chips. It's now a household name, up there with marinara and mayonnaise. But unlike those sauces, pesto has always conferred a certain gourmet status in the States; its rise in popularity in the 1980s coincided with the period when Americans started exploring regional Italian cooking and embracing all things Mediterranean. With its fresh basil, extra-virgin olive oil, aged Parmigiano-Reggiano, and exotic pine nuts—all newly fetishized ingredients sold at specialty food stores such as Dean & DeLuca in New York City—pesto was perfectly poised to become the poster child of a new foodie movement. Though it was often served the traditional way, tossed with pasta or gnocchi, home cooks, chefs, and caterers added pesto to everything from tuna to orzo salad (that staple of the prepared-food section, a growing category in supermarkets at the time). It was slathered on bruschetta, layered with goat cheese or mascarpone and sun-dried tomatoes or roasted red peppers to make tricolored *torta,* and tossed with vegetables. "Pesto is the quiche of the '80s," Nora Ephron wrote in her screenplay for the 1989 film *When Harry Met Sally,* and she was right: When Sheila Lukins and Julie Rosso published *The Silver Palate Cookbook* (Workman) in 1979, they included just one recipe for pesto and another for pasta with pesto. When that volume went on to become a bible for American epicures, their follow-up, *The New Basics* (Workman, 1989), devoted four pages to the sauce, with recipes for making everything from black bean pesto to peanut pesto, and tips for using these pestos to season potatoes, nachos, grilled fish, aïoli (another emblem of the 1980s), and more. The fallout from pesto's overwhelming popularity is that the simple beauty of the original was often lost. But the pesto period, as over the top as it often was, marked a turning point in American cuisine, when cooks started embracing, and experimenting with, regional recipes. Today, it remains a hallmark of our culinary flexibility. *—Dana Bowen*



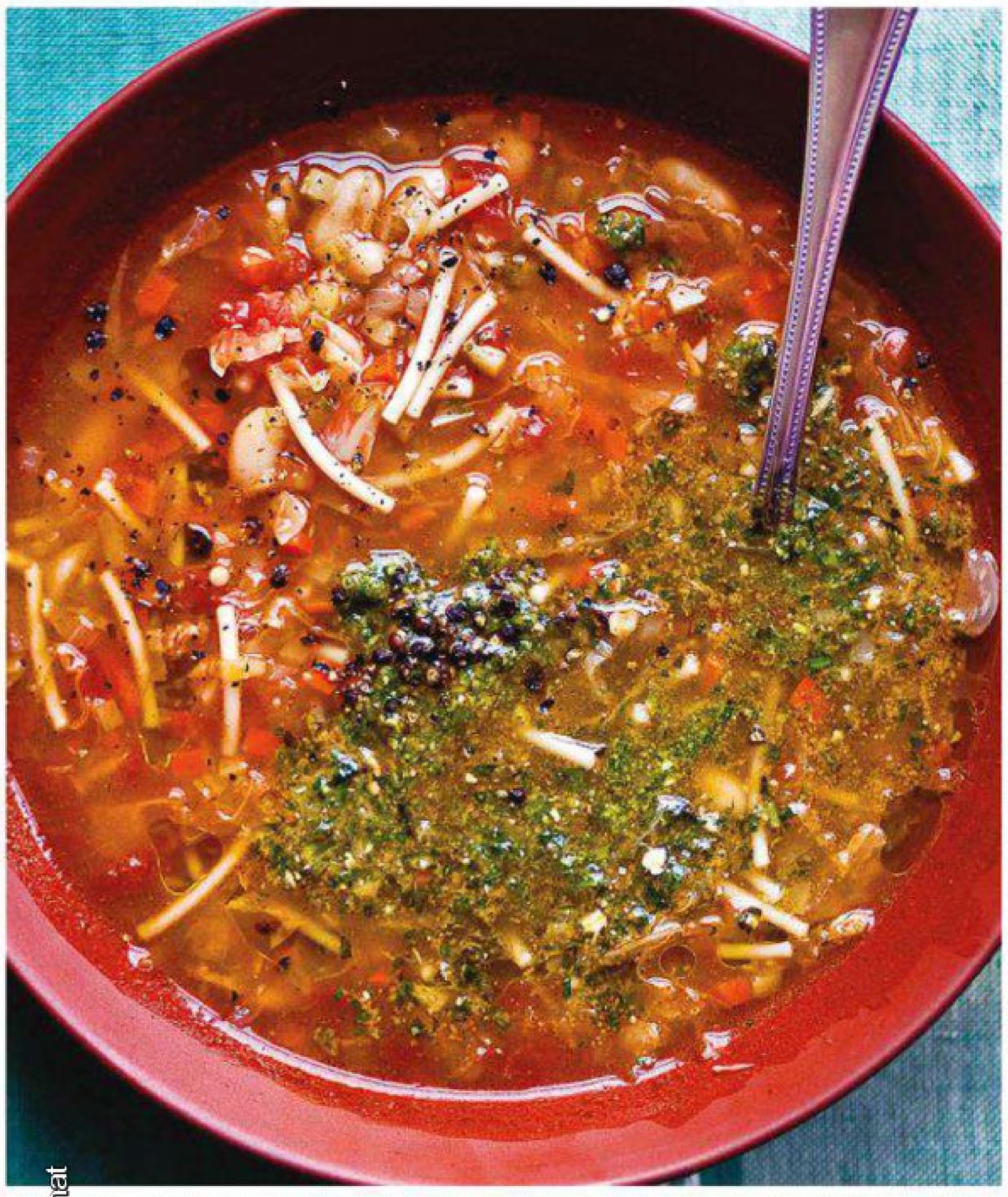




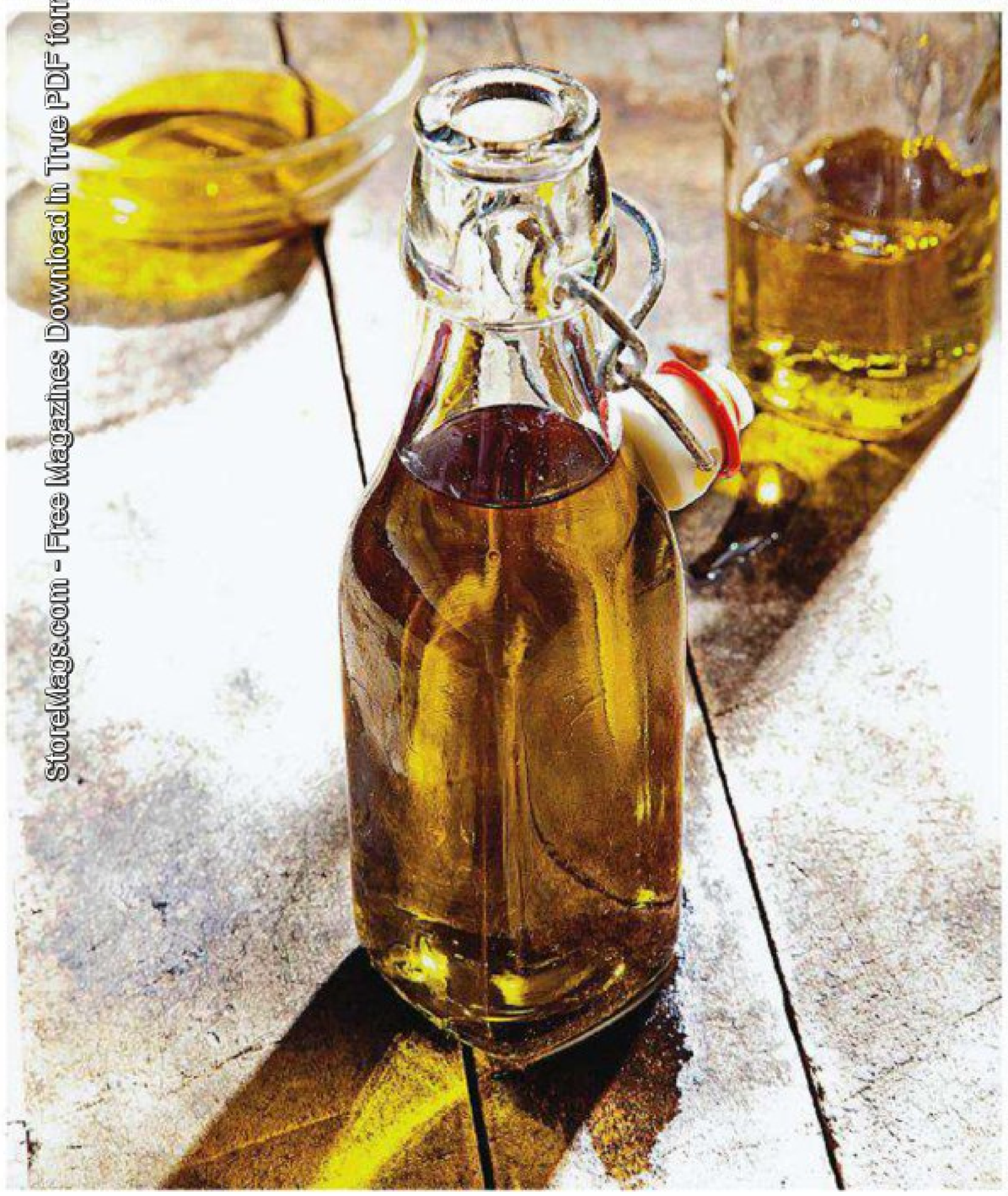


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Top, from left: crispy calamari with pesto mayonnaise; Genoa, circa 1915; *soupe au pistou,* a Provençal specialty; pesto panna cotta. Bottom, from left: Manarola, a Ligurian village; butternut squash ravioli with oregano-hazelnut pesto; Ligurian olive oil, a key ingredient in *pesto genovese*; *busiate alla trapanese,* a Sicilian pasta with a spicy tomato pesto. (See pages 81, 82, and 83 for recipes.)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD COLEMAN; EMIL P. ALBRECHT/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK; TODD COLEMAN (3); PAUL PHOTOGRAPHY

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Elements *of* Pesto

ITS BEAUTY LIES IN THE INGREDIENTS

Since traditional *pesto genovese* consists of nothing more than basil, garlic, nuts, olive oil, salt, and cheese, the quality and variety of the ingredients you choose really matter. When it comes to basil, shop for the youngest herbs you can find, with the smallest, palest leaves. The smell should be aromatic, not licorice-like. If you can't find young basil, soften the bitterness of deep green mature leaves by blanching them in almost boiling water for 30 seconds, then plunge them in an ice bath. Youth is also important when it comes to garlic—the younger it is, the sweeter and juicier it will be. Italian-grown pignoli are ideal for their round, rich flavor, but they're expensive. Imported Chinese pine nuts are cheaper and acceptable, though walnuts, soaked in very hot water for at least an hour to release any acrid notes, are a better substitute. Coarse grained salt should be used to help pulverize the ingredients; rather than kosher salt, use sea salt, which imparts a subtle briny flavor akin to what you find in authentic *pesto genovese*. Liguria's local olive oil, made with tiny taggiasca olives, is a perfect match for pesto: It has a pale gold color and a delicate, slighty saline flavor. Avoid overly fruity or sharp oils that will overpower the sauce. As for cheese, nowadays Parmigiano-Reggiano, ideally aged at least 24 months, is preferred for its rich, nutty taste, but it's traditional to add percorino, a sharp, salty sheep's milk cheese, from Sardinia or Southern Italy, to round out the pesto's flavor. —*L.S.*

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

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(continued from page 71) tomatoes, not to mention the classic salsa verde made of garlic mashed with parsley and other herbs. (See "The World of Pesto," at right.)

Why did the basil version rise above all others to monopolize the term pesto? And why in Liguria? I can only speculate that because pasta was a great Genoese tradition, and because home cooks there were used to combining it with the garlic and green herbs that grew wild in the hills, pesto was Liguria's destiny.

One of the first things I learned about pesto when I started studying Ligurian food is that it is not used randomly. Sure, you can find the adventurous chef who makes pesto pizza or basil gelato. But these are outliers. For the most part, Ligurian cooks use pesto in two ways: to flavor pasta and to garnish a specific soup.

That soup is *minestrone alla Genovese,* and it is a staple of daily life—green and dense, entirely vegetarian, made with water, vegetables, potatoes and beans, boiled to a thick and creamy consistency. At the end, you add a bit of pasta and, finally, a generous spoonful of pesto that sends the soup heavenward. This habit is shared by the neighboring French Riviera, where cooks call their pesto *pistou,* though their version has evolved without nuts and often without cheese, too.

Ligurians use pesto to sauce a local variety of dried fettucine called *trenette;* fresh tagliatelle, known in dialect as *picagge;* and its thinner cousin *tagliarini*, often tossing the pasta with boiled potatoes and string beans. Pesto goes, too, on gnocchi and on a fresh corkscrew pasta called *trofie*, and also on a unique Genoese style of lasagne, a simple dish of fresh pasta cut into squares, not layered with cheese and baked, but simply tossed with generous amounts of vivid green pesto. It's the brightest tasting comfort food I know.

After leaving Lilli, Sergio and I negotiate the swoops and turns of Liguria's mountains to find a restaurant that he believes serves some of the region's best pesto. He parks us at Osteria Baccicin dü Carü, founded in 1890 and today run by Gianni Bruzzone, a slim, reserved man who still insists on making his signature sauce with a mortar and pestle.

"Thirty-five percent of the ingredients should be basil," Bruzzone says while gently pounding garlic with his heavy pestle in his kitchen. He explains that the mortar method is superior because it gently coaxes the essential oils from the basil leaves, as opposed to the tearing action of a blender blade. Bruz-



TODD COLEMAN

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The *World* of Pesto

COUSINS OF LIGURIA'S FAMED SAUCE

Genoa's famous basil pesto belongs to a genre of pounded herb sauces found all across the Mediterranean. Some are traditonal; others are creations of home cooks or chefs—all are the kind of multipurpose condiments you can use for marinades, sauces, dips, spreads, and more. Earthy walnut pesto ① is common in northern Italy as a pasta sauce and bruschetta topping. Parsley pesto with capers and anchovies ② is a piquant match for rich fish, like mackerel; it's similar in flavor to salsa verde ③, which is thickened with breadcrumbs and often served with grilled meats. Garlic scape pesto ④ is mildly flavored and perfect for tossing with fresh egg pasta, while robust Sicilian pesto rosso ⑤, made with almonds and sun-dried tomatoes, is best with dried pasta. Enriched with sour cream, Germany's grüne sosse ⑥ features herbs like sorrel and watercress; it's wonderful with boiled vegetables. Cilantro adds a piney note to pepita ⑦ pesto that pairs well with squash, and pistachio pesto ⑧ is rather sweet, making it great with roasted vegetables. Peppery arugula pesto ⑨ is delicious dolloped on ripe tomatoes or steak. A touch of ricotta in Calabrese pesto ⑩ tempers the flavor of roasted red peppers. (See page 80 and 81 for recipes.) —*Ben Mims*

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Grow *Your* Own

A GARDENER'S GUIDE TO PESTO

It can be difficult to find young, tender Genoa-style basil in American markets. And while the more mature basil that's sold in the United States makes great pesto, the sauce won't have the delicate flavor and light green color you find in Liguria. But the good news is, it's easy to grow your own: Even if you don't have a patch of earth, you can do as the urban Genoese do and grow the herb in flowerpots on your window sill or terrace. There are a few rules I've learned from pesto expert Sergio Rossi that have proven successful in my New Jersey garden. First, get the right seeds: Botanically speaking, Genoa-style basil falls under the category of *Ocimum basilicum,* or sweet basil. I order from the company Seeds of Italy (growitalian.com), which is the U.S. distributor for Franchi Sementi Spa., Italy's oldest seed company, family-run since 1783; order the basilico genovese or piccolo verde varieties, both of which produce fragrant, fantastic basil for pesto. The second thing you have to know is that basil loves heat; don't plant it until the nights are warm (no lower than 60 to 65 degrees Farenheit). You also need nutrient-rich soil for basil; mixing in some compost or manure does the trick. Do not seed your basil in rows; rather, sprinkle seeds the way you would sprinkle salt on a dish, covering your area as evenly as possible to grow a carpet of basil, with at least one seed for each square inch. Cover the seeds with one-eighth inch of soil, and pat the soil down lightly. Cover the area gently with white garden fabric until the seeds sprout. To maintain heat, you can use a plastic garden tunnel over the leaves, and in climates that have strong sun, use a shade cloth over that to protect the delicate plants. Keep the soil moist. Your basil should be ready in around 30 days. When a plant has sprouted four to eight concave leaves, each about the size of the head of a teaspoon, pull out the plant, roots and all, but use only the leaves for making pesto. Harvest cyclically, keeping a few patches growing at a time. —*L.S.*

zone's mortar is classic Genoese style: six inches deep with four "ears" spaced around the lip and used as handles, which he grabs onto so he can rotate the bowl with one hand while pounding with the other. He tells me that the sequence of ingredients matters: He begins with garlic, then adds pine nuts, then basil, then coarse sea salt (which helps crush the leaves). After a few minutes the leaves start to break apart and the beginnings of a sauce emerge. In goes a stream of oil, and the sauce becomes silky. The cheese is last, and it gives body and creaminess—first Parmigiano-Reggiano, and then some aged pecorino at the end, for bite. "Pesto should be delicate, but decisive," he says.

Bruzzone disappears and returns with boiled potato gnocchi, which he transfers directly into the mortar, mixes with the sauce, and spoons onto our plates. The gnocchi is tender, and the pesto, though vibrant and herbaceous, has a punch of garlic and salt. All of its elements are elegantly balanced.

Bruzzone's osteria is the type of place that Genoa's traditionalists hold dear. True pesto is a point of pride—don't even get people like Sergio started on the multinational corporations that sell inferior products under the name *pesto genovese*. In 1992, a group of local businessmen created the Order of the Pesto Brotherhood, whose *cavalieri* teach and promote authentic pesto and give their stamp of approval to places like Osteria Baccicin dü Carü. To the same end, the region of Liguria sought—and recently won—D.O.P. status (Denominazione di Origine Protetta) for Genoese basil, which means it's the only product that legally can bear that name. And purists argue that authentic *pesto genovese* must be made with this D.O.P. basil.

Ironically, though, records show that in the past, pesto was sometimes made with substitutions like parsley and marjoram, even butter, in Liguria. People in the mountains added cream from their cows; in certain coastal towns pesto contained (and still does) a bit of tangy local fresh cheese called prescinseua. And while many people today prefer and can afford Parmigiano's delicate flavor, the grandmothers usually used salty pecorino in their pesto because the cheese that came on boats from Sardinia was far more accessible and cheaper than that which came across mountain roads from Parma. Similarly, local walnuts were common instead of *pignoli* from Pisa, which became the norm after the second World War, when more people could afford to put pricier ingredients in their pesto. Before that, Sergio says, "People used what they had."

THE NEXT DAY, SERGIO offers to show me how to make the typical pastas that go with pesto. He drives me an hour north of Genoa to the mountain village of Montoggio where his 82-year-old mother, Enrichetta, is cracking eggs and dropping the yolks into the cratered mountain of flour on her pasta board. A professional cook since the age of 12, she moves with power, and within minutes she is kneading dough and transforming it into a thin sheet of pasta with a rolling pin.

Enrichetta cuts half the dough into squares for lasagne, the rest into ribbons, for tagliatelle. Sergio makes gnocchi by mashing steaming hot potatos through a ricer and mixing in flour and egg; together, we roll the dough into long cylinders and slice off thumbnail-size pieces.

Because pesto has been a way of life for Sergio since he was a child, he has no nostalgia. That's why when I ask, "Is there really a difference between the mortar and the blender?" I know I am baiting him. His answer: "I'd rather have pesto made by a good cook in a blender than pesto made by a bad cook in a mortar." Then he adds, "You don't still wash your clothes in a river, do you?"

First we make pesto in a mortar, using Lilli's basil. Enrichetta insists that garlic goes in after the rest of the ingredients, to prevent bitterness. Handing me the pestle, she tells me to pound toward the center and rotate the mortar clockwise as I go. Before long, and with not a little bit of muscle, the leaves and cheese and nuts and garlic magically transform into a verdant cream.

For the next batch, the same ingredients go into the blender, which Enrichetta plays like an instrument, repeatedly stopping it to press down the contents with a spatula. The result is smooth if not quite as luxurious and creamy as the traditional method.



MAP: THE M FACTORY

Still, I have to admit the blender version is exceptionally good.

As we sit to eat, Enrichetta's pestos strike me as every bit as perfect as Gianni Bruzzone's. But they are different—silkier. I am not quite sure why, but I know now that each and every pesto is unique. Each one is an expression of its maker. I have deciphered Sergio's riddle. Pesto is indeed the way a person makes pesto.

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PESTOS

The following pestos can be made using a mortar and pestle, if you'd like. To do so, pound together the garlic and nuts until mashed. (The pounding action should be gentle and rhythmic.) Transfer the garlic mixture to a bowl. Add the herbs and salt to the mortar; pound until mashed to small bits. (If your mortar is small, begin with a small amount; gradually add more herbs as they break down.) Return the nut mixture to the mortar; pound everything into a paste. While working the pestle, gradually add the cheese followed by the oil, to make a creamy sauce.

Garlic Scape Pesto

Makes about 1 cup

Garlic's young shoots perfume this pesto (pictured on page 76). If you can't find scapes, substitute green garlic or a combination of garlic and chives.

- 1 cup finely chopped garlic scapes (or ⅔ cup finely chopped chives, plus ⅓ cup finely chopped garlic)
- ¾ cup olive oil
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan
- ⅓ cup roasted, salted cashews
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Pulse garlic scapes, oil, parmesan, and cashews in a food processor until finely chopped; season with salt and pepper.

Grüne Sosse

(German-style Green Sauce)

Makes about 2 cups

Germany's famed herb sauce (pictured on page 77) is tangy with buttermilk and sour cream.

- 2 cups packed parsley
- 1½ cups packed watercress
- 1 cup finely chopped chives
- 1 cup packed sorrel
- ⅓ cup buttermilk
- ⅓ cup plain Greek yogurt
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1½ tsp. walnut oil
- 1 hard-boiled egg yolk
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Process parsley, watercress, chives, sorrel, buttermilk, yogurt, sour cream, oil, egg yolk, and lemon juice in a food processor until smooth; season with salt and pepper.

Pepita and Cilantro Pesto

Makes about 1 cup

Toasted pepitas (pumpkin seeds) give this Mexican-inspired pesto (pictured on page 77) a warm, toasty flavor. Serve it with roasted squash or grilled fish.

- 2 cups packed cilantro
- ⅔ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ⅓ cup toasted pepitas
- ⅓ cup finely grated parmesan
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Pulse cilantro, oil, pepitas, parmesan, lime juice, and garlic in a food processor until finely chopped; season with salt and pepper.

Pesto Calabrese

Makes about 1½ cups

This spicy, southern Italian-style pesto (pictured on page 77) was given to us by Rocco Arena, owner of San Rocco restaurant in New York City.

- 1 small eggplant, peeled and cut into ½" cubes
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- ½ small yellow onion, minced
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and minced
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- ⅓ cup packed basil
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Place eggplant in a colander and toss with 2 tsp. salt; let sit for 20 minutes. Drain eggplant and dry on paper towels; set aside.

2 Heat oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat; add pepper and onion, and cook, stirring often, until soft and lightly caramelized, about 10 minutes. Add eggplant, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 8 minutes. Add tomatoes, and cook, stirring, until soft, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a food processor and add ricotta and basil; puree until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Pesto di Noce

(Walnut Pesto)

Makes about 1½ cups

Italians have long used walnuts for pesto; they lend a rich earthiness to the sauce (pictured on page 76).

- 1½ cups packed basil
- ½ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup toasted walnuts
- ¼ cup finely grated pecorino
- ¼ cup finely grated parmesan
- 2 sundried tomatoes in oil, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Process basil, oil, walnuts, pecorino, parmesan, tomatoes, and garlic in a food processor until finely chopped; season with salt and pepper.

Pesto di Pistacchio

(Pistachio Pesto)

Makes about 1¼ cups

The rich flavor of pistachio is balanced with lemon zest in this bright-tasting sauce (pictured on page 77).

- 1½ cups packed basil
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 cup dry-roasted pistachios
- ½ cup packed cilantro
- ¼ cup finely grated parmesan
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 3 cloves garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Process basil, oil, pistachios, cilantro, parmesan, zest, and garlic in a food processor until finely chopped; season with salt and pepper.

Pesto di Prezzemolo

(Parsley Pesto with Anchovies)

Makes about 1¼ cups

Capers and anchovies lend briny depth to this parsley sauce (pictured on page 77), which is fantastic tossed with grilled or boiled vegetables.

- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup packed parsley leaves
- ⅔ cup capers, drained
- 1 tbsp. packed oregano leaves
- 1 tbsp. white wine vinegar
- ½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 anchovy filets in oil, drained
- 2 cloves garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Process oil, parsley, capers, oregano, vinegar, chile flakes, anchovies, and garlic in a food processor until a smooth sauce forms; season with salt and pepper.

Pesto di Rucola

(Arugula Pesto)

Makes about 1¾ cups

This peppery pesto (pictured on page 76) is fantastic drizzled over steamed artichokes or grilled fish.

- 2 cups packed arugula
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup finely grated pecorino
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan
- ⅓ cup pine nuts
- 1 tbsp. lemon zest
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Process arugula, oil, pecorino, parmesan, nuts, zest, and garlic in a food processor until finely chopped; season with salt and pepper.

Pesto Genovese

(Classic Basil Pesto)

Makes about 1½ cups

In this classic version of pesto, the basil leaves are blanched in boiling water, then quickly shocked in ice water, to give the sauce a brilliant green hue and to reduce any bitterness.

- 4 cups packed basil, blanched briefly in boiling water and shocked in ice water
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan
- ¼ cup pine nuts
- 3 tbsp. finely grated pecorino
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Coarse sea salt, to taste

Process basil, oil, parmesan, pine nuts, pecorino, and garlic in a food processor until smooth; season with salt.

Pesto Rosso

(Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto)

Makes about 1½ cups

This pesto (pictured on page 76) gets its intense red hue from sun-dried tomatoes and Aleppo pepper, which bring sweetness and heat to its flavor.

- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup toasted blanched almonds, chopped
- 2 tbsp. rosemary leaves, minced
- 2 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. Aleppo pepper (see page 118) or paprika
- 20 pitted oil-cured black olives
- 10 sun-dried tomatoes in oil, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Process oil, almonds, rosemary, vinegar, sugar, Aleppo, olives, tomatoes, and garlic in a food processor until finely chopped; season with salt and pepper.

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Salsa Verde

(Herb Sauce with Breadcrumbs)

Makes about 2 cups

Italy's other ubiquitous green sauce (pictured on page 77) is flavored with parsley and thickened with bread crumbs. Seasoned with vinegar and anchovies, it's bold enough to stand up to grilled meats.

- ⅓ cup fresh bread crumbs
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 cup packed parsley, chopped
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 tbsp. capers, drained
- 1 tbsp. pine nuts
- 10 pitted green olives, chopped
- 2 anchovy filets, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 hard-boiled egg yolk
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Stir together bread crumbs and vinegar in a bowl; set aside. Process parsley, oil, capers, nuts, olives, anchovies, garlic, and egg yolk in a food processor until smooth; stir into bread crumb mixture and season with salt and pepper.

MAIN DISHES

Busiate alla Trapanese

(Corkscrew Pasta with Trapanese Pesto)

Serves 6–8

This flavorful pesto (pictured on page 73) from the seaside city of Trapani, Sicily, is traditionally served with homemade *busiate,* a spiral-shaped pasta (pictured on page 73). Substitute dried fusilli in a pinch.

- 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- ¾ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ½ cup packed basil
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan, plus more for serving
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp. golden raisins
- 2 tbsp. capers, drained
- ¼ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 3 anchovy filets in oil, drained
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 pepperoncini, stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 cups flour
- 3 eggs, plus 1 egg yolk

1 Make the pesto: Place tomatoes in a food processor and process until finely chopped; pour tomatoes into a fine strainer and drain off excess juices. Process tomatoes along with almonds, basil, parmesan, 5 tbsp. oil, raisins, capers, chile flakes, anchovies, garlic, and pepperoncini in a food processor until finely ground. Season with salt and pepper, and refrigerate until needed.

2 Make the pasta: In a large bowl, whisk together flour and 1 tsp. salt; form a well in the center. Pour remaining oil, eggs and yolk, and 2 tbsp. water in well, and using a fork, slowly stir until flour is incorporated and dough forms. Transfer to a floured work surface and knead until smooth, about 8 minutes. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and let rest for 1 hour.

3 Divide dough into 6 equal pieces; working with 1 piece at a time, roll into a ⅛"-thick rope and cut rope into 2" lengths. Place one end of each length on the end of a wooden skewer or pencil and roll on work surface until length wraps around skewer and forms a corkscrew.

4 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat; working in batches, add pasta and cook, stirring, until al dente, about 8 minutes. Drain, reserving ¼ cup cooking water, and transfer pasta to a large bowl along with pesto; toss to combine, adding a couple spoonfuls of cooking water, if needed, to create a smooth sauce. Transfer to a large serving platter or bowls and serve with more parmesan cheese.

Many Shades of Green



TODD COLEMAN

A relative of mint, basil thrives in hot, dry climates. Though it is predominantly associated with Mediterranean cuisines, the herb is native to India and used the world over in fresh and cooked preparations. There are more than 40 culinary basil varieties ranging in flavor from delicately herbaceous to downright emphatic, and we had fun experimenting with them to take our pestos in different directions. The most common variety for pesto is **Genovese basil** ①, sometimes labeled basil genovese: It's what's known as a sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), prized for its delicate fragrance, which doesn't overpower the other ingredients in the sauce. **Cinnamon basil** ② and **spicy bush basil** ③ both have a spicy flavor, which is why they're often havested young as "micro basils," before they become too assertive; we liked the edge these baby leaves gave to pesto, and the fact that we could use the leaves without removing their stems. There are many varieties of **Thai basil** ④, which has a light anise flavor that doesn't dissipate when heated. Often used in stir-fries and curries, it makes for a gorgeously perfumed pesto. **Opal basil** ⑤ has a strong clove flavor and makes a sharp, deep purple pesto. It's also great infused into simple syrups for cocktails, or macerated with peaches for dessert. Many basils, like **African Blue** ⑥ and **Mixed Bloom** ⑦, have a purple hue to their stems and leaves; both yield aromatic, licorice-flavored pestos that are delicious with dark meat chicken and lamb. **Lemon basil's** ⑧ citric, almost floral aroma and astringent taste make it a natural for a pesto to serve with vegetables and fish. —*Kellie Evans*

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Pairing note: Punta Crena Mataòssu 2009 ($25) from Liguria stands up to this full-flavored dish.

Butternut Squash Ravioli with Oregano–Hazelnut Pesto

Serves 6–8

In this sweet-savory dish (pictured on 72) basil and oregano add herbal brightness to butternut squash, browned butter, and hazelnuts.

FOR THE OREGANO-HAZELNUT PESTO:

- 1½ cups packed oregano
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup packed basil
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan
- ¼ cup hazelnuts, toasted
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE RAVIOLI:

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1 small (about 1¾ lb.) butternut squash, halved lengthwise and seeds removed
- 1 cup finely grated parmesan, plus more for serving
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, browned
- 1 tbsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 2 tsp. minced sage, plus ½ cup packed whole leaves
- 2 tsp. minced oregano
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup canola oil
- 80 square wonton wrappers
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

1 Make the pesto: Process oregano, oil, basil, parmesan, hazelnuts, and garlic, in a food processor until finely ground; season with salt and pepper, and set aside.

2 Make the ravioli: Heat oven to 450°. Rub garlic and squash with olive oil, and place, cut sides down, on a baking sheet, and bake until tender, about 30 minutes. Let cool briefly, and then scoop out the squash flesh and garlic cloves from their skins and pass both through a potato ricer or food mill into a large bowl; mix in parmesan, browned butter, nutmeg, 2 tsp. finely chopped sage, oregano, and salt and pepper. Set filling aside.

3 Heat canola oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat; add whole sage leaves and fry until crisp, about 20 seconds. Transfer to paper towels to drain; set aside.

3 Place 1 wonton wrapper on a work surface and place 1 tbsp. filling in center; brush edge of wrapper with egg and top with another wrapper; seal edges. Repeat with remaining wrappers and filling. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat; working in batches, add ravioli, and cook until tender, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and toss with pesto until evenly coated; arrange on a large serving platter or plates and top with fried sage leaves.

Pairing Note: The sparkling, off-dry Punta Crena Lumassina Frizzante 2009 ($19) offsets the richness of this dish with a crisp acidity.

Crispy Calamari with Pesto Mayonnaise

Serves 8

Chef Jim Leiken of DBGB in New York City serves pesto-spiked mayonnaise as a dipping sauce for fried calamari, cauliflower, and chickpeas (pictured on page 72).

FOR THE PESTO MAYONNAISE:

- 1½ cups extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup packed parsley
- 1 cup packed basil
- ¼ cup toasted pine nuts

FOR THE CALAMARI:

- Canola oil, for frying
- ⅓ cup Wondra flour
- ⅓ cup cornstarch
- ⅓ cup chickpea flour (see page 118)
- 1 lb. cleaned calamari, heads cut into ¼"-wide rings
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup cauliflower florets
- ½ cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped preserved lemon rind (optional)
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped lemon segments
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. Aleppo pepper (see page 118) or paprika
- ½ tsp. each ground cinnamon, ground cumin, ground ginger, sweet paprika, ground lime powder (optional; see page 118), and ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. ground coriander
- ¼ tsp. ground fennel seed
- Mixed greens, for serving

1 Make the pesto mayonnaise: Heat oil and garlic in a 1-qt. saucepan over low heat, and cook until garlic is soft, about 40 minutes; remove garlic, set aside, and let oil cool. In a medium bowl, whisk together lemon juice, mustard, salt, and yolk until smooth; slowly drizzle in cooled oil, whisking constantly, until sauce emulsifies into a smooth mayonnaise. Puree mayonnaise, reserved garlic, herbs, and nuts in a blender until smooth; transfer to a serving bowl and chill.

2 Pour oil to a depth of 2" in a 6-qt. Dutch oven, and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Whisk together Wondra, cornstarch, and chickpea flour in a bowl; set aside. Combine calamari, milk, cauliflower, and chickpeas in a another bowl; drain and transfer to flour mixture, tossing until coated. Working in batches, fry calamari, cauliflower, and chickpeas until golden brown and calamari is cooked through, about 2 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain, and then place in a large bowl and toss with lemon rind and segments, salt, Aleppo pepper, cinnamon, cumin, ginger, paprika, lime powder, black pepper, coriander, and fennel. Transfer to a large serving platter on top of mixed greens and serve with pesto mayonnaise on the side.

Gnocchi al Pesto

(Potato Dumplings with Pesto)

Serves 6–8

Tender gnocchi tossed with *pesto genovese* (pictured on page 70) is a popular first course, or *primo piatto,* in Liguria.

- 1 lb. Russet potatoes, unpeeled
- 1¼ cups semolina flour, sifted
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup Genovese pesto (see recipe on page 92)

1 Put potatoes into a 4-qt. pot of salted water; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until potatoes are tender, 25 minutes. Drain; let cool. Peel potatoes; pass through medium plate of a food mill into a bowl. Add flour and eggs; using a fork, stir until dough forms. Transfer dough to a work surface; knead briefly to combine. Divide the dough into 6 portions. Roll each portion into a ½"-thick rope. Cut ropes into ½"-wide pieces; using the back of a fork, roll pieces along tines to imprint them with ridges.

2 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, and working in batches, add gnocchi and cook until just tender, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer gnocchi to a large bowl and toss with pesto until evenly coated, adding a couple spoonfuls of cooking water, if needed, to create a smooth sauce. Transfer to a large serving platter or bowls and serve with more freshly grated parmesan.

Pairing Note: The delicately flavored pesto pairs well with the buoyant Ligurian white Punta Crena Pigato 2009 ($25).

Pesto Focaccia

Serves 12–16

This version of Liguria's famed focaccia (pictured on 69) comes to us from Biagio Settepani, chef and co-owner of Pasticceria Bruno in New York City.

FOR THE PESTO:

- 1¼ cups packed basil leaves
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup finely grated parmesan
- 2 tbsp. minced sundried tomatoes in oil
- 2 tbsp. pine nuts
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE FOCACCIA:

- 1 tbsp. active dry yeast
- ⅓ cup boiled, mashed potatoes
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tbsp. lager beer
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt
- 4½ cups flour
- 1 cup durum wheat flour (see page 118)
- 12 kalamata olives, pitted and halved
- 10 cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ small red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan
- ½ cup packed basil leaves

1 Make the pesto: Process basil, oil, parmesan, tomatoes, nuts, garlic, and salt and pepper in a food processor until smooth; refrigerate.

2 In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a hook, combine yeast and 2 cups water heated to 115°; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. In a bowl, stir together potatoes, butter, beer, and salt until smooth; add to yeast mixture and whisk until smooth. Add flours and mix on medium speed until dough forms. Increase speed to medium-high and knead until dough is smooth, about 8 minutes. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let rise until tripled in volume, about 3 hours.

3 Transfer dough to a greased 13" x 18" rimmed baking sheet and using your fingers, spread dough until it completely covers the bottom. Using your hands, spread pesto evenly over dough, and then scatter olives, tomatoes, and onions over pesto. Sprinkle cheese over top of dough and using your fingertips, press dough all over to form dimples; let sit, uncovered until puffed, about 45 minutes.

4 Heat oven to 400°. Bake focaccia until edges are golden brown and dough is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes and then scatter basil leaves over top; cut into squares and serve.

Pesto-Rubbed Chicken with Panzanella

Serves 4

Pesto genovese adds herbal brightness to this grilled chicken served over a toasted bread salad (pictured on page 68), but any flavor pesto will work.

- 1 3- to 4-lb. chicken, cut into 6 pieces
- ¾ cup Genovese pesto (see recipe on page 92)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 1-lb. loaf country-style white bread, cut into 1½" slices
- ½ cup olive oil, plus more for brushing
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- 1 red bell pepper
- 2 cups packed baby arugula
- ½ cup oil-cured black olives
- ¼ cup roughly chopped parsley
- ½ small red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ small cucumber, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 3 cloves roasted garlic, mashed
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon

1 Using your fingers, loosen skin from meat on chicken and spread ½ cup pesto in between skin and meat. Transfer chicken to a baking sheet and season generously with salt and pepper; set aside.

2 Make the panzanella: Build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, arrange an oven rack 4" from broiler element and heat broiler to high.) Brush bread slices with oil and toss tomatoes and bell pepper with 2 tbsp. oil; season all with salt and pepper. Place bread and vegetables on grill and cook, turning as needed, until bread is toasted and tomatoes begin to burst, about 5 minutes. Remove bread and tomatoes, and continue cooking bell pepper until it is charred all over, about 7 minutes more. Let pepper cool, and then peel and remove seeds; thinly slice and transfer to a large bowl along with tomatoes, arugula, olives, parsley, onion, and cucumber. Cut bread slices into 1½" cubes and add to salad.

3 Heat grill to 425°. Place chicken skin side down on grill and cook, covered and turning once, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thigh reads 165°, about 25 minutes. Rub with remaining pesto and cook until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thigh reads 165°, about 5 minutes more. (Alternatively, heat an oven to 475°, and cook chicken, skin side up, for 25 minutes; rub with remaining pesto and cook until chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°.) Transfer chicken to a plate and tent with foil; rest for 20 minutes.

4 To serve, whisk together ½ cup oil, vinegar, roasted garlic, lemon juice, and zest in a small bowl; pour over bread salad, toss to combine, and season with salt and pepper. Transfer panzanella to a large serving platter, and place chicken over top; pour any juices that accumulated on the plate over salad.

Pairing Note: Refreshing and bracingly dry, Punta Crena Pettirosso Frizzante 2009 ($19) is a delicious pink bubbly, perfect for this summer dish.

Soupe au Pistou

(Provençal Vegetable Soup with Pistou)

Serves 8–10

Pistou, the Provençal cousin of pesto, is stirred into this summer vegetable soup (pictured on page 73) just before serving.

FOR THE PISTOU:

- 4 cups packed basil
- 1 cup grated parmesan
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 plum tomato, cored

FOR THE SOUPE:

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 oz. pancetta, minced
- 5 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- ½ medium zucchini, chopped
- ¼ head Savoy cabbage, cored and thinly shredded
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 7 whole, peeled canned tomatoes, chopped
- ⅓ cup broken dried spaghetti
- 1 15-oz. can cannelini beans
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Make the pistou: Process basil, parmesan, oil, salt, garlic, and tomato in a food processor until finely ground. Season with salt and pepper, and set aside.

2 Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; add pancetta and cook, stirring often, until fat has rendered, about 2 minutes. Add garlic, carrots, celery, and onions, reduce heat to medium; cook, covered and stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender, 12–15 minutes. Add zucchini and cabbage; cook, covered, until wilted, 3–5 minutes. Add stock and tomatoes, and bring to a boil. Add pasta and cook until al dente, about 8 minutes. Mash half the beans with a fork; add to soup along with whole beans—cook until warmed through. Season with salt and pepper. Ladle soup into bowls; serve with pistou dolloped on top.

Pairing Note: L'Esprit de Sainte Marguerite 2010 ($18), a grenache-syrah rosé from Côtes de Provence, has a dry finish that pairs well with this summer soup.

Trenette al Pesto

(Trenette with Pesto, Green Beans, and Potatoes)

Serves 4

This classic Genoese dish (pictured on TK) combines basil pesto with the region's version of fettucine, as well as string beans and potatoes.

- 3 cups packed basil
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp. finely grated parmesan
- 2 tbsp. finely grated pecorino
- 2 tbsp. pine nuts
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 lb. trenette or linguine pasta
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 8 oz. haricot verts, trimmed
- 8 oz. baby red potatoes, roasted and halved

1 Make the pesto: Process basil, oil, cheeses, nuts, and garlic in a food processor until finely ground. Season with salt and pepper; set aside.

2 Bring a 6-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil over high heat; add pasta and cook, stirring, until half-cooked, about 5 minutes. Add haricot verts, and cook, stirring, until pasta is al dente and vegetables are tender, about 3 minutes more. Drain pasta and vegetables, reserving ¼ cup cooking water, and transfer to a large bowl along with potatoes and pesto; toss to combine, adding a couple tablespoons reserved cooking water, if needed, to make a smooth sauce.

DESSERT

Pesto Panna Cotta

Serves 8

This inventive dish (pictured on page 73) from Marco Porceddu at Asellina in New York City reinterprets the classic sauce into a sweet dessert.

- 2 ¼-oz. packages unflavored powdered gelatin
- 1⅓ cups milk
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup packed basil leaves
- 1¼ cup sugar
- 1 lb. tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts
- Cherry tomato quarters, to garnish

1 Make the panna cotta: In a bowl, sprinkle gelatin over ⅓ cup milk; let sit for 10 minutes. Bring remaining milk along with the cream, basil, and ¾ cup sugar to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan; stir until sugar dissolves. Transfer to a blender, add gelatin mixture, and puree until smooth; pour into eight 4-oz. ramekins. Chill until firm, 3–4 hours.

2 Make the sorbet: Bring remaining sugar, tomatoes, salt, and ½ cup water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring, until tomatoes break down, 12–15 minutes. Puree in a blender; strain and chill. Process in an ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. Freeze until firm.

3 Make the candied pine nuts: Heat sugar and 1 tbsp. water in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat, and cook, swirling, until bubbling; add pine nuts and coat. Spread nuts on a sheet of foil; cool. Break apart into bite-size pieces; set aside. To serve, briefly dip the bottom of each ramekin in a bowl of hot tap water, invert onto a serving plate; top with nuts. Serve with a scoop of tomato sorbet topped with cherry tomatoes.

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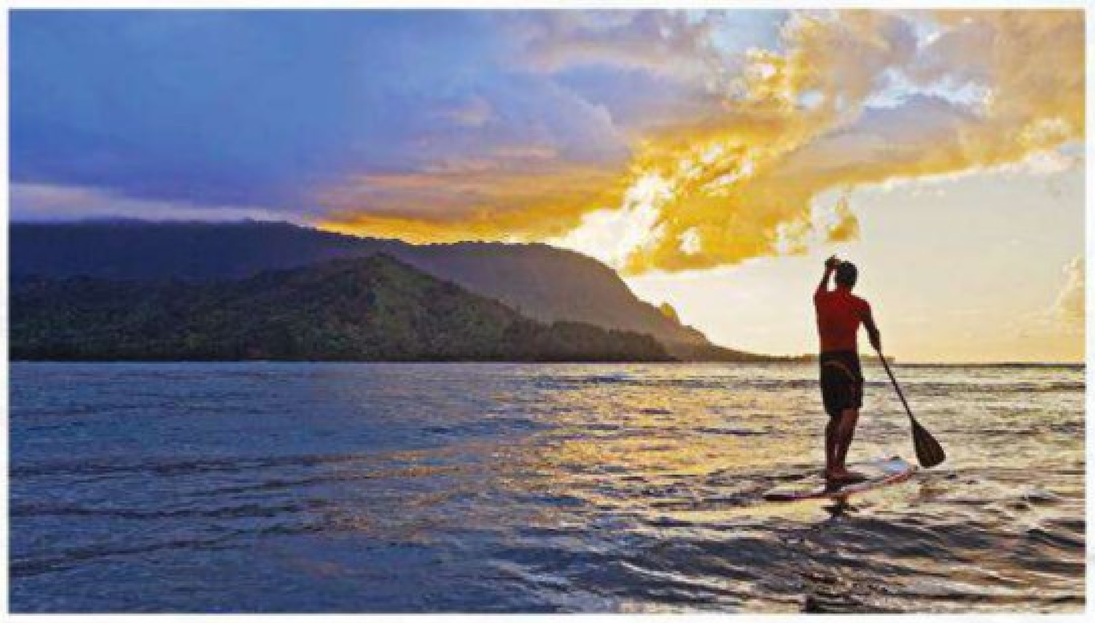


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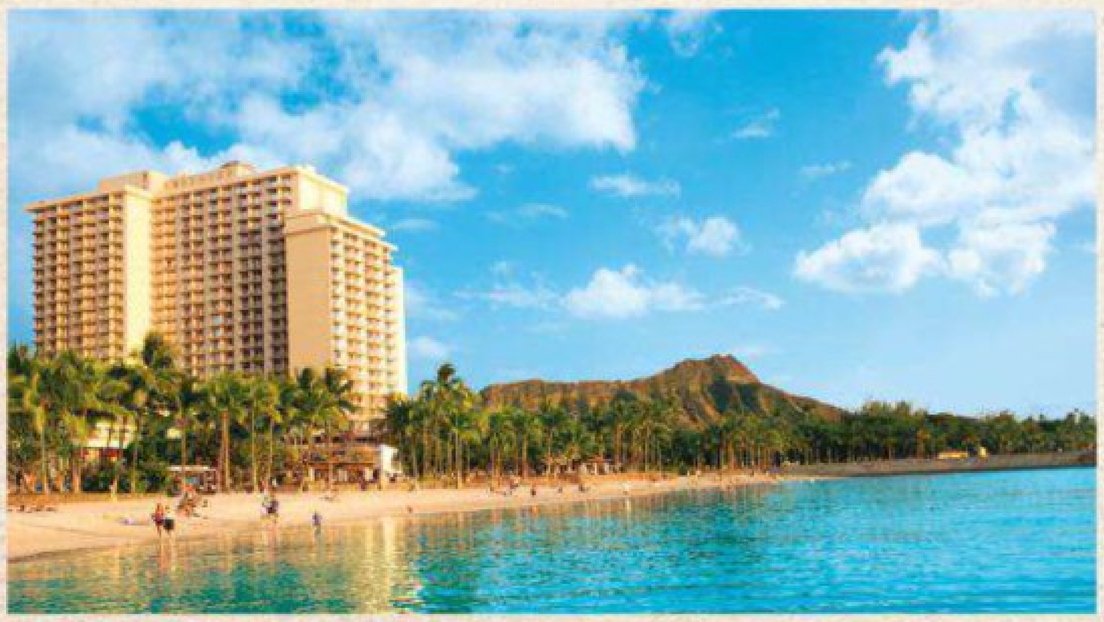
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WHAT TO EAT NOW ON O'AHU

Honolulu, on the island of O'ahu, is Hawai'i's best food destination, a city where the state's finest chefs creatively mingle top-quality seasonal ingredients and bold ethnic flavors in palate-pleasing, sumptuous dishes. Top restaurants, cafés, diners, and fast food places are committed to serving up the freshest and best-tasting ingredients from the state's ranchers, farmers, and fishermen—a farm-to-table endeavor known as **Hawai'i Regional Cuisine.**

MEATS Diners in Honolulu are eating more locally produced meats. Chef Ed Kenney at Town restaurant features O'ahu's Shinsato Hog Farm on his menu in every way possible, from chops and tenderloins to ears and feet, grilled, roasted, cured, and pickled. At his namesake restaurant, chef Alan Wong showcases naturally raised grass fed, grain finished beef from Kuahiwi Ranch. At Roy's Waikīkī, pasture-raised, tasty and tender Hawaiian red veal stars on the menu in a play on spaghetti and meatballs, Vietnamese style. Zippy's, the ubiquitous O'ahu fast food chain, grills up succulent locally produced, grass-fed beef burgers.

FISH There's always an abundance of fresh fish from Hawai'i's well-managed long line fishery; mahimahi, ono, and tombo 'ahi are especially good in the fall season. An early morning visit to Honolulu's fish auction will no doubt whet your appetite; visit Nico's next door for a fresh fish breakfast. Look for kampachi (Hawaiian yellowtail), tilapia, abalone, shrimp, and other farm-raised seafood that support sustainable food resources.

PRODUCE Hawai'i's climate encourages year-round production of fruits and vegetables, but there are seasonal variations in what's available and in their flavor profile. O'ahu-grown Sweet Gold pineapples, tree-ripe papaya and mangoes, exotic rambutan and longan are delectable in the fall as are salad greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, eggplant, and corn.

MARKET The best way to see what's in season—and what you might find on restaurant menus—is to visit the KCC Farmers' Market. Peruse this weekly harvest celebration of farmers and ranchers. Sample fresh cut Waialua asparagus, delectable hearts of palm, briny Kahuku sea asparagus, spicy watercress—the fresh, unique flavors are all part of experiencing Hawai'i's climate and geography. Graze on grilled sweet Kahuku corn and succulent in-the-shell abalone, fried green tomatoes, taro dips, fresh baked breads and pastries, and a host of ethnic plates. At KCC, residents and visitors alike share in the best of Honolulu's vibrant and delectable food scene.

For more fresh tips for travelers, go to **www.visit-oahu.com.**



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ALAN WONG'S
www.alanwongs.com

NICO'S
www.nicospier38.com

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www.roysrestaurants.com

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www.townkaimuki.com

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Heart

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of the Valley

California's Central Valley is the most productive agricultural region on Earth; it's also just a great place to eat

By Gerald Haslam Photography by Landon Nordeman

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If you buy a bunch of asparagus in Iowa or Indiana, chances are it was grown in the San Joaquin Valley

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's Joad family "drove through Tehachapi in the morning glow, and the sun came up behind them and then—suddenly they saw the great valley below them.... The vineyards, the orchards, the great flat valley green and beautiful, the trees set in rows, and the farm houses.... Pa sighed, 'I never knowed there was anything like her...' Ruthie and Winfield looked at it, and Ruthie whispered, 'It's California.'"

It was indeed California, but not the one travel agents advertise. This is the southern end of California's Great Central Valley; it is called the San Joaquin, while the northern section is termed the Sacramento, both named for their major rivers. The entire Great Valley is an enclosed prairie, geologically an ancient seabed in a trough between uplifted mountains, nearly 450 miles long and up to 90 miles wide. The entire area is about the size of Egypt.

This is where I am from. A great-great grandfather of mine from Missouri, on my father's side of the family, entered the Valley in the 1840s in search of free land for a farm. An ancestor of my mother migrated north from Mexico across the border in the 1850s to work as a *vaquero*, or cowboy. I grew up in Oildale, in the Valley's southern reaches, as the son of an oil worker; like most working-class kids, I earned my spending money as a seasonal farm laborer. I irrigated sugar beets, swamped seed potatoes, and drove tractors in Arvin, east of Bakersfield.

My experience here has shaped the way I think about food—about where it comes from, how it grows, and where it goes. The San Joaquin Valley is considered to be the most productive agricultural region in the world; more than 50 percent of California's crops come from here. Paul F. Starrs and Peter Goin, in their definitive *Field Guide to California Agriculture* (University of California Press, 2010), refer to it as "the agricultural giant in California," which means something when you consider that California is the country's leading farm state. If you buy a bunch of asparagus in Iowa or Indiana, chances are it was grown in the Valley and shipped out of a huge refrigerated warehouse in Stockton or *(continued on page 93)*

Gerald Haslam *is the author of* The Other California: The Great Central Valley in Life and Letters *(University of Nevada Press; 1994) among several others. This is his first article for* Saveur.

Previous page: Dishwasher Matthew Talley outside the Woodlon Diner, where he works, in Acampo, California. This page: Fruit trees near Mettler, with the Sierra Nevada mountains as backdrop. Facing page, top to bottom: Vintage auto enthusiasts in a 1950 Ford at a weekly classic car cruise-in in Alcampo; dairy cows at the 540-acre Fiscalini Farms, a maker of artisanal cheeses in Modesto.

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Workers harvest white peache[illegible]t Kozuki Farms in Parlier.

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More than 100 languages are spoken by the people who migrated here to be a part of the nation's engine of food production

(continued from page 88) Fresno; same goes for grapes, almonds, pistachios, oranges, pomegranates, and prunes.

Because soil and sun are provided by nature, and seasonal laborers are cheap and plentiful, only aridity has been a problem for agriculture. Two massive irrigation systems have changed that: the Central Valley Project, begun in 1937, and the State Water Project, started in 1957. Both are considered incomplete, despite scores of dams and reservoirs, as well as hundreds of miles of aqueducts. This is thirsty land. A few years ago, my wife, Jan, and I were cruising south through rain-cleansed air down Interstate 5 on the Valley's western edge toward our hometown. The freeway here runs along the eastern edge of the Diablo Range, treeless but grassy hills dotted with range cattle. Then, near Kettlemen Hills, a little north of Bakersfield, an unexpected expanse of water appeared along the side of the road. I nosed our car to a stop on the highway's shoulder and gazed as if upon a ghost; this was a remnant puddle of what was once was Tulare Lake, the largest body of freshwater west of the Great Lakes. In the 19th century it provided tons of fish and turtles for San Francisco's restaurants. Then the diversion of its feeder streams to create new irrigation routes caused the lake to dry, so that only in the wettest years are locals now reminded a lake ever existed.

Elsewhere, the valley bed is irrigated cropland. From the San Joaquin's back roads, much of this cropland appears empty, fields of green without nearby farmhouses. Agriculture here is truly agribusiness, dominated by huge corporations. There are, of course, plenty of small farms, too, but corporations reign. As early as 1981, most of the 700,000 acres irrigated by the State Water Project in three prolific counties—Tulare, Kings, and Kern—were owned by just eight huge companies. This pattern, which can be traced to the earlier Spanish and Mexican land grants that concentrated huge tracts in the hands of an elite, has led to great wealth for a few, great poverty for many. Annually, five of California's ten poorest communities—populated mostly by migrant Hispanic farm laborers—are located in this cornucopian Valley.

There has always been a hard edge to life here, but until the current economic depression, the Great Valley also boasted the state's fastest growing population, and a society as varied as the multiplicity of commercial crops grown—Chinese, Dutch, Hmongs, Basques, Armenians, Sikhs, Mexicans, and, of course, plentiful varied palefaces, among many, many others. Says journalist and memoirist Richard Rodriguez, who grew up in Sacramento, "Here it is much easier to remember that the world is not simply derived from Europe." It has been estimated that more than 100 languages are spoken in the Great Valley's communities, all of them belonging to people who migrated here to be a part of the enormous engine of food production.

Yet the agricultural setting—its vast distances between built structures, its monolithic fields—can be deceptive. Driving down the more populous east side of the Valley on Highway 99, one passes through Sacramento, the state capital, then Stockton, Modesto, Merced, Fresno, and Bakersfield. These are modern cities with colleges or universities, with progressive urban centers. They are also little worlds, populated by people who may have come for seasonal labor, but who have left their indelible cultural—and culinary—mark.

Near Tulare Lake's now-desiccated shore is a town locals favor for its food: Hanford, on Highway 198. It is famous for China Alley, the remnant of a historic district founded by Chinese railroad workers in the late 1870s, and its culinary legacy: celebrated restaurants such as the Hanford Chinese Kitchen. It also hosts other gems, like the Hanford Portuguese Bakery, which offers Portuguese doughnuts and other pastries, along with cheeses, sausages, and breads. The dairy industry in the San Joaquin Valley has been dominated by Portuguese immigrants, like the Fagundes family who runs Fagundes Old World Cheese in Hanford, producing *queijo fresco* and other award-winning cheeses.

In Bakersfield, at the southern end of the valley, Basques who settled here in the 1890s have lent their own style of life and, of course, of dining. Old restaurants such as Noriega's and the Pyrenees Cafe that once hosted and fed bachelor shepherds from the old country, now serve vast, rib-sticking, family-style meals that have become a regional tradition. Here, at long tables, you meet fellow diners as you compete for that last slice of pickled tongue or dig into oxtail stew.

Nearby is a local Italian institution, where Jan and I sometimes grab lunch: the 101-year-old Luigi's Delicatessen. Jan orders a tri-tip sandwich—a local specialty made using meat from the lean triangle of beef cut from the bottom of the sirloin—and I get a house favorite, the "Half & Half," a half plate of pasta with savory meat sauce with a half plate of Luigi's vinegary, garlicky white beans. On the wall, my high school football team's photo from 1953 is still posted along with hundreds of other local sports shots.

You find Armenian food in Fresno at places like Bedrosian's Armenian Deli, George's Shish Kebab, and Nina's Bakery; Merced's Houa Khong features delicious Laotian and Thai fare; Asian dishes from several traditions highlight dining in Stockton at establishments such as Saigon (Vietnamese), On Lok Sam (Chinese), and Sho Mi (Japanese). Great Mexican regional foods can be had virtually everywhere in the Valley, often from what are locally called "roach coaches," roving taco trucks that turn out everything from grilled carnitas to homemade tamales to—on weekends—delicious *menudo*, a long-cooked tripe and hominy soup.

Despite the prevalence of factory farms, fresh produce stands are a local tradition, and they may be found on many back roads, as can more and more "pick-and-pay" farms. Mas and Marcy Masumoto in Del Rey, 15 miles south of Fresno, annually "lease" trees growing organic peaches to townsfolk like me. During the harvest season, lessees assemble on two weekends to pick their peaches, laugh at one another's ineptness, and enjoy a farm breakfast. Here, on the Masumoto's 63-year-old, 80-acre family farm—not huge by Valley standards, but certainly not small—more than a few of us are reminded of our youth spent as seasonal farm laborers.

Across the Valley on its west side, at the foot of the sparsely settled Diablo Range, can be found the remains of one *(continued on page 96)*

Facing page, from top: the Delta-Mendota Canal outside of Patterson, one of many in a massive network of dams, aqueducts, and canals that delivers water to irrigate more than 2 million acres of San Joaquin Valley farmland; Ricardo Mendoza, a cowhand, at Fiscalini Farms.

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Steak with a side of rigatoni in red sauce at Luigi's, a 101-year-old delicatessen and restaurant in Bakersfield.



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You find Armenian food in Fresno, delicious Laotian and Thai fare in Merced, and great Mexican regional dishes everywhere

(continued from page 93) of the state's oldest roads, El Camino Viejo, an 18th-century Spanish cart track. This dry region used to look like what writer Marc Reisner called the "Serengeti of North America." In the 19th century, it was populated by herds of ruminants that thrived on the semiarid grasslands: pronghorns, tule elk, mule deer, as well wild horses and cattle. The grazers were preyed upon by wolves and mountain lions, and grizzly bears were common, too, because waterways were full of salmon in season. Though visions of that natural past can be glimpsed here and there—on a recent day hike, I saw coyotes, elk, deer, and a golden eagle—this habitat has changed due to the irrigation. Not only was Tulare Lake lost, but one of the West's great salmon streams, the San Joaquin River, was sacrificed for irrigation as well. Only recently, thanks to local activists, have the courts ordered that enough water be released to maintain year-round flow in the stream. And the Valley continues to transform: Some of the older farms that replaced wildlife habitats are themselves being lost to urban and suburban development, at the rate of more than 10,000 acres a year.

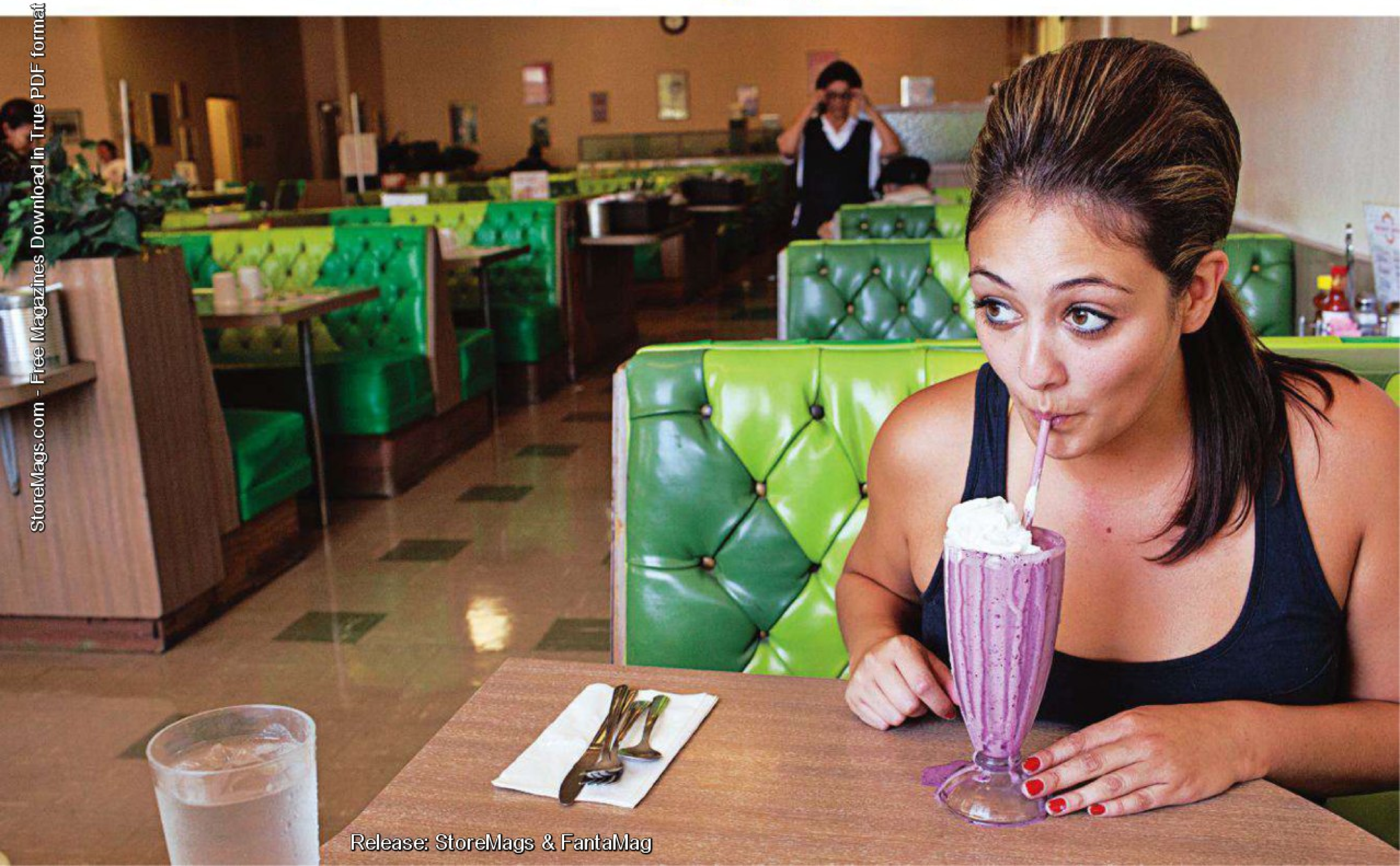
But, despite the pace of change, there remains an old-timey feel to parts of the Valley. Interstate 5 skirts pleasant towns, such as Patterson and Gustine, which retain a 1950s charm. In these parts, the Valley is a place of diners whose menus and decor haven't changed in half a century. It is a land of southern conviviality, likely attributable to the Dust Bowl migrants who settled here. Pickups driven by Stetson-topped men bounce past, often with a dog braced in the bed. This was once one of America's cattle kingdoms, and Oakdale on the Stanislaus River still calls itself the "Cowboy Capital of the World." To the rodeos, stock car races, and Friday night football, add everything from Portuguese bullfights to African-American Juneteenth commemorations to Hmong New Year's celebrations, and it's easy to see the Valley for what it is: a land of both nostalgia and constant cultural churning. Car radios here broadcast Oildale's Merle Haggard, as well as the Norteño accordion of Flaco Jiménez and passionate Portuguese *fados*.

And when the wind has cleared the smog from the cities and agribusiness clusters, and the snowcapped Sierra Nevada that frame the east come into sight, the surrounding countryside retains a haunting quality that contrasts with the green grids of agriculture, and you understand why this place, both a heaven and a hell, has been considered by migrants, long before the Joads and long after, to be California's heart.

Above: Albert Nunes of Nunes Farms, driving a tractor that's pulling a hay rake over his alfalfa fields, part of his 204-acre spread in Merced. Facing page, from top: A neon sign advertises the specialty of the house at the 89-year-old Visalia Tea Garden, a Chinese restaurant in Visalia; Nancy Pereira enjoys a boysenberry milk shake at Grandmarie's Chicken Pie Shop in Fresno.

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The Guide San Joaquin Valley

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WHERE TO STAY

Citizen Hotel

926 J Street, Sacramento (916/447-2700; citizenhotel.com). $199 double. Opened in 2008 in the ornate 1926 Cal Western Life building, this boutique hotel boasts 198 rooms, each with its own Apple Mac Mini for streaming movies and music. Its eatery, the Grange, offers local farm-to-table dining.

The Padre Hotel

1702 18th Street, Bakersfield (888/443-3387; the padrehotel.com). $119 double. New owners have spent $18 million on this 83-year-old hotel whose 112 rooms and suites are appointed with knickknacks that evoke the Bakersfield's oil-baron era.

Wonder Valley Ranch Resort & Conference Center

6450 Elwood Road, Sanger (800/821-2801; wondervalley.com). $149 double. This 1600-acre ranch near Fresno has cottages, spacious rooms, and dormitory-style digs. Activities include trail riding, canoeing, tennis, and paint-ball.

WHERE TO EAT

Grandmarie's Chicken Pie Shop

861 East Olive Avenue, Fresno (559/237-5042). Moderate. Opened 82 years ago by Marie Richardson, known for her version of the namesake, this diner serves chicken-pie omelettes and a chicken pot pie plate, with mashed potatoes in chicken gravy, biscuits, and coleslaw.

Hanford Chinese Kitchen

145 North 11th Avenue, Hanford (559/583-0147; hanfordchinesekitchen.com). Moderate. Located in historic China Alley, this well-liked restaurant serves Chinese-American fare such as prawns and glazed walnuts.

Hanford Portuguese Bakery

1738 North 10th Avenue, Hanford (559/582-3866). Inexpensive. Portuguese sweet bread, cupcakes in flavors ranging from coconut to pinto bean, and on Saturdays, *filhos* (lemon-flavored doughnuts) are specialties of this bakery and grocery, which also offers olive oil, linguiça, frozen sardines and octopus, and other foods imported from Portugal.

Houa Khong Restaurant

85 East 13th Street Merced (209/722-5541). Moderate. A bare-bones Laotian restaurant serving superior versions of *tom yom par* fish soup and pork-and-eggplant Penang curry.

Junior's Taco Truck

740 G Street, Los Banos (209/829-0629). Inexpensive. Well-spiced, tender carnitas (pork), *cabeza* (beef cheek), and *lengua* (beef tongue) tacos on warm corn tortillas. Get them "with everything"—cilantro, onion, and green salsa.

Luigi's Delicatessen

725 E 19th Street, Bakersfield (661/322-0926; shopluigis.com). Moderate. This Italian grocery, delicatessen, and restaurant celebrated its centennial last year. Tuesday to Saturday, lunchtime crowds come for the house marinated beans and specials, including Thursday's Italian dip sandwiches of shaved tri-tip.

Mulvaney's B & L

1215 19th Street, Sacramento (916/441-6022; mulvaneysbl.com). Expensive. Housed in an 1893 firehouse, this rustic yet elegant restaurant specializes in upscale American cuisine. Chef–owner Patrick Mulvaney takes inspiration from the Valley's bounty, serving dishes such as roasted chestnut and cauliflower soup, and short rib ravioli.

Nina's Bakery

2022 West Shaw Avenue, Fresno (559/449-9999). Inexpensive. An Armenian bakery and deli selling fresh breads like *choreg* (a brioche-like Easter bread) and *lahmajoun* (flatbread topped with ground beef), and groceries including grape leaves, cured soujouk, and basturma—all perfect for a picnic.

Noreiga Hotel

525 Sumner Street, Bakersfield (661/322-8419; noriegahotel.com). Moderate. This 1893 hotel-turned-restaurant, recipient of a 2011 James Beard American Classic award, is the place for raucous family-style meals of Basque shepherd's dishes—cabbage soup with beans, sliced pickled tongue, crispy spare ribs, a lauded oxtail stew—washed down with chilled red wine. Reservations are a must. Closed Mondays.

Steve Medlen's House of Beef

201 North Third Avenue, Oakdale (209/847-5991; houseofbeef.com). Moderate. Over 30 years ago, Steve Medlen, a third-generation meat processor, opened a butchering plant. He soon added a mobile grill, which grew into a full-service restaurant offering well-prepared ribs, steaks, and tri-tip sandwiches. Closed Sundays.

Superior Dairy Products Company

325 North Douty Street, Hanford (559/582-0481). Inexpensive. This 82-year-old shop serves giant scoops of housemade ice cream in flavors like peach, made with local fruit. Indulge in the S.O.S. (supersize sundae): seven scoops of ice cream, sherbert, hot fudge, strawberry and marshmallow toppings, bananas, whipped cream, and nuts.

Trelio

438 Clovis Avenue, Clovis (559/297-0783; treliorestaurant.com). Expensive. Chef Michael Shackelford's New American menu changes based on what's good at Fresno's farmers' markets. Sample local wines along with dishes such as fried Vine Ripe Farms green tomatoes and orchard apple and Central Valley dried-fruit Waldorf salad.



Woodlon Diner

24335 North Highway 99, Acampo (209/334-2233). Inexpensive. A truck stop serving biscuits and sausage gravy, made from scratch; chicken-fried steak; and a patty melt on thick-sliced rye with Thousand Island dressing and Swiss cheese, along with thick milkshakes.

WHAT TO DO

Oakdale Feed and Seed Oakdale

141 North Yosemite Avenue, Oakdale (209/847-0307; houseofbeef.com). An outfitter for you and your horse, offering everything from jeans, Western shirts, Stetsons, and boots to saddles and animal feed. A true slice of Valley cowboy life.

Sacramento Central Farmers' Market

8th Street at W Street, Sacramento (www.california-grown.com). In a city that's home to more than a dozen farmers' markets, this one under the El Dorado (WX) Freeway is a favorite. Sundays 8 A.M. to noon, the overpass becomes a canopy for local dairy, meat, and produce, including many obscure Asian vegetables.

Vineyard Farmers' Market

Blackstone and Shaw Streets, Fresno (vineyardfarmersmarket.com). Located under a stunning arbor built for the market 31 years ago, this biweekly bazaar sells local foods, including free-range eggs, grass-fed meats, flowers, honey, and organic produce. Wednesdays, 3 to 6 P.M.; Saturdays, 7 A.M. to noon.

Wind Wolves Preserve

16019 Maricopa Highway, Bakersfield (661/858-1115; wildlandsconservancy.org/preserve.html). On the Valley's southern end, this 95,000-acre preserve offers a glimpse of the area before agriculture. Home to tule elk, kit foxes, and blunt-nosed leopard lizards, it's lovely for hiking, picnicking, or weekend camping.

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Breaking the Fast

In the United Arab Emirates, Ramadan is a period of both reflection and revelry

By Anissa Helou Photography by Jason Lowe

It all started with a short tweet about a trip I was planning to Dubai, which attracted the attention of a woman named Bodour. She lived in Sharjah, one of the seven United Arab Emirates, only a 30-minute drive north from Dubai. "So few people know about Emirati food," she tweeted back. "I'd be happy to give you a culinary tour." ☙ I had been to Dubai in the 1970s, when it was still a modest fishing village and neighboring Abu Dhabi was more developed, but the visit was brief, and apart from going to the fish market, I saw very little of Emirati life and never got to taste any of the local fare. Of course, a lot has changed since then; Dubai is now much glitzier than Abu Dhabi, the UAE's capital city. But the emirate of Abu Dhabi—meaning the territory ruled by its emir—still accounts for more than 80 percent of all the emirates.

Amani Al Ali prepares Ramadan specialties at the Sharjah Heritage Center. Facing page: At the same meal, Yousif Al Hamadi breaks the fast with *h'riss,* a wheat berry porridge. (See page 108 for recipes.)

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I was going back to work as a host on a cooking and travel show for Abu Dhabi TV, so you can imagine my excitement at this unexpected offer of hospitality. I accepted, not knowing that my generous guide was Sheika Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, the daughter of Sharjah's ruler. (Each emirate has its own royal family that rules as a separate monarchy.) I couldn't have asked for a better introduction: Not only did we bond over a shared love of Middle Eastern cooking (Al Qasimi owns a restaurant in Sharjah city, in fact) but within two days she had arranged for me to sample a range of the emirate's signature dishes.

When I arrived in the city of Sharjah, a modern metropolis of about 800,000, I met my new friend, a lovely woman in her early 30s, at a heritage center where local cooks give classes. Half a dozen women—all of them, like Al Qasimi, wearing black *thobs,* long robes that covered their clothes, their hair hidden by scarves—were in a large, traditional open-air kitchen preparing a goat stew, some spiced rice, and other dishes. Al Qasimi explained that while the country's large expat population from Iran, Palestine, India, and other countries had certainly influenced the local fare over the decades, true Emirati cuisine has its own distinct character. Fish from the Arabian Sea plays a major part in the diet, and meat and rice dishes are complexly spiced: Saffron and cardamom are the predominant flavors, and a spice mix called *bzar,* made with spices like cumin and coriander, is added to practically everything. Rice and flat breads are staples, and some of the dishes Al Qasimi served straddled the line between savory and sweet, thanks to a touch of sugar or date syrup. Al Qasimi also told me that camel meat is a specialty, particularly among Bedouin families, but that nowadays it is mostly reserved for special occasions.

"You'll have to come back during Ramadan," she told me when I thanked her for the wonderful culinary tour. "That's the best time to sample all the special dishes." It was a sentiment I heard time and again during that trip. I knew that Ramadan, which is always held during the ninth month of the lunar calendar, is a delicious time of the year in the Muslim world: Since people fast from sunrise to sunset, not letting even a drop of water into their mouths, meals take on a special meaning. It's a holiday I came to appreciate growing up in Beirut: Even though my family is Christian, I loved Ramadan because our Muslim neighbors would always bring my mother special sweets or dishes they had prepared for the nightly feasting. And before dawn, I would rise to the sound of the *tabbal*—a drum beater who roamed the neighborhood, waking people up so that they could have their last meal before the fast would begin again.

Throughout the month of Ramadan, life takes on a different rhythm, slow and sleepy during the day—many people work shorter hours this time of year—and absolutely joyful at night. Ramadan is also a month of reflection, piety, and charity. Those who are well off gather with their families to feast and enjoy each other's company, and those who are less privileged eat in mosques or in tents erected in public places where wealthy patrons provide nightly meals.

I had heard that Ramadan tents are set up everywhere in the Emirates—big, lavish ones in luxury hotels and public squares and small ones in the courtyards of private homes. And when I asked people about their favorite Emirati foods, they almost always answered with a story about a Ramadan *iftar,* the meal that breaks the daily fast. So before I even left Abu Dhabi I started making plans to return the following September, when Ramadan would take place (the dates change each year) to experience Emirati food during Islam's holiest month.

Throughout the month of Ramadan, life takes on a different rhythm: slow and sleepy during the day and absolutely joyful at night. It's by far the most delicious time of year across the Muslim world

A few months later, I returned to Sharjah toward the end of Ramadan. Al Qasimi had recently given birth to her third child and was not able to meet me, but Mariam Saeed, a warm and cheerful woman who works as the heritage center's main cook, had gathered a group of her friends for a special *iftar.* The kitchen was filled with conversation and activity when I arrived; one woman was mixing puréed pumpkin to make *assidat al-boubar*, a pumpkin halvah, and other cooks set up a long rectangular mat in the breezy courtyard and started covering it with platters of food.

This is the traditional way to eat in the Emirates: sitting on a mat on the floor, using your right hand to ferry food to the mouth, as was decreed by the Prophet Muhammad; the only utensils were spoons for soups and desserts. As the guest of honor, I was directed to sit to the right of the host, Saeed, who took her place at a spot in the middle.

As we ate, Saeed explained that even though the *iftar* menu changes daily, there are some dishes that are always served during Ramadan. One is *h'riss,* a porridge made with wheat berries and lamb that's cooked until fall-apart tender. The version we ate was drizzled with ghee blended with *bzar,* which gave the *h'riss* a warm, toasty flavor. *Tharid,* also known as the Prophet Muhammad's favorite dish, is another Ramadan essential. It's made of layers of paper-thin, cracker-like bread called *regag*, which I'd watched the women make by rolling a very soft ball of dough over a large hot plate until a thin, crisp layer forms. The *regag* is broken up and spread in a thick layer over a dish; then it's topped with a vegetable and meat stew called *salona*. I did as the others did and picked up pieces of the bread together with a bit of the tender spiced meat and vegetables.

Aside from these dishes and the requisite platter of cabbage, sweet onion, and mints for refreshing the palate, anything else is fair game. My hosts had prepared a few other Emirati classics—*ghoozi,* baby goat roasted and served over basmati rice with a semisweet mixture of chickpeas, raisins, and onion, and *machbuss rubian,* a pilaf made with head-on prawns and flavored with *bzar* and dried limes.

For dessert, there was *lgeimat,* airy fritters drizzled with date syrup; *balaleet,* a sweet-savory vermicelli and egg dish that's sometimes served for breakfast; and that creamy pumpkin halvah, a puddinglike version made with rose water and saffron. As we finished the feast, I asked one woman how often families typically prepare elaborate meals like this during the month of Ramadan. "As often as possible," she replied.

The next day I visited my friend Tariq Al Mehyass, a wonderful poet from Abu Dhabi with whom I worked on the television show a few months prior. Al Mehyass's father hosts an open house meal every Sunday evening, which is common practice throughout the Gulf. I attended one while filming the show and was eager to return during Ramadan, when Al *(continued on page 106)*

Anissa Helou *is the author of* Offal: The Fifth Quarter *(Absolute Press, 2011). She lives in London.*



Machbuss rubian, **a shrimp pilaf flavored with dried limes (see page 110 for a recipe).**

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Assidat al-boubar, **a pumpkin halvah flavored with saffron. Facing page: a Ramadan meal at the Sharjah Heritage Center, featuring *tharid,* a lamb and vegetable stew, second from the top. (See pages 108 and 110 for recipes.)**



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(continued from page 102) Mehyass told me that the meals often last until midnight.

The cooks employed in his home are all men, mostly from India, whom Al Mehyass's mother and grandmother taught to cook Emirati food. And their *tharid* is the best I have eaten anywhere: its moist bread layered with stew enriched with small, luscious nuggets of melted lamb tail fat. That evening they also prepared a dish I had not tasted before called *al-marqoq,* made of balls of fried dough in a tomatoey sauce, and *khobz chebab,* an addictive flatbread drizzled with date syrup.

It was a huge privilege for me to be received so sumptuously as one of the family. But for anyone who doesn't have local friends, I realized, Ramadan is the perfect opportunity to experience Emirati cooking because *iftars* can be found practically everywhere, from mosques to markets, and it's tradition to share.

There's a ritual to breaking the fast that I became attuned to after a few days. First, you wait for the muezzin (the man who chants the daily prayers in the mosque) to announce the setting of the sun. And when the announcement is made, no one rushes to a meal. Instead they gently break their fast by drinking a glass of water and eating a few dates, always an odd number—one, three, or five, as favored by the Prophet—and never too many. I am always impressed by how patient people are despite the fact that they have not eaten or drunk anything the whole day. Then everyone goes to pray, and only after that will *iftar* be served.

I went one late afternoon, as the sun was setting, to Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, the Emirates' largest, and, for me, the most beautiful of those that have been built recently there; with its 82 white marble domes and four slender minarets, it is both vast and elegant at the same time. As I neared the mosque, hordes of people rushed past me; hundreds of people, mostly foreign workers, running up the hill to reach the dining areas, some in the gardens and others in tents. The men went one way, and the women, many of whom had brought their children, were directed to their own tent on the other side of the mosque.

Tarps had been laid right on the ground, and boxes of food had been placed on top at regular intervals. Each box contained a full



meal: lamb biryani (roasted meat and rice layered with a spicy onion sauce), salad, dates, water, orange juice, and a small tub of halvah. Because they had been fasting all day and really needed to eat, I felt embarrassed about starting a conversation with my neighbors to find out who they were and why they were there. By then I had mastered how to eat rice with my hand without being messy, and except for my clothes, I seemed to fit in.

The food we ate was very good, and I made my way back to a large catering kitchen to see how it was prepared. Gargantuan amounts of rice and meat were cooking in huge pots, and dozens of cooks were packing the food in boxes, which they placed in large metal cabinets to be sent to mosques and other public places. Abu Dhabi's ruler, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was paying for these thousands of meals to be prepared and distributed daily. And there was no stinting on the quality. Real saffron was stirred into the rice, and the meat was beautifully seasoned and perfectly cooked.

The Ramadan tents set up in the gardens of Emirati luxury hotels offer a completely different *iftar* experience. There, you need to book your table and pay for your meal, which is normally a hybrid of local and Western dishes. At the Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi, where I was staying, the *iftar* tent was booked with supremely elegant women, many wearing beautifully embroidered *thobs,* and stylish men in their crisp white robes (called *kandura*). I visited the post-dinner tent, a hazy world filled with smoke from hookah pipes, where men and women were whiling the night away smoking, playing games, and listening to live music.

There are *iftars* on the streets, too. Wherever I walked just after sunset, I saw people eating right on the pavement or off the back of trucks in the market areas. I stopped to talk to one market vendor who was heating stuffed vegetables on a small makeshift grill he had set up near his produce truck. As is the norm with Arab hospitality, he and his business partner invited me to share their *iftar*. I couldn't resist. I love stuffed vegetables, and theirs looked so delicious.

We sat and ate eggplants and baby zucchini stuffed with rice, lamb, and tomatoes, and for a good half hour we talked about our favorite vegetables and the many different ways of preparing them. It was a delightful and surprising impromptu meal, and like so many I encountered during Ramadan in the Emirates, it made me feel so welcome.

The Guide United Arab Emirates

Ramadan's dates are tied to the lunar calendar. In 2011, it begins around August 1 and ends around August 30.

WHERE TO STAY

Emirates Palace *West End Corniche, Abu Dhabi (971/2/690-9000; emiratespalace.com). $335 double.* The most lavish hotel in the Emirates, with a dozen restaurants, exhibition spaces, a concert hall, a private beach, and vast grounds. Rooms are similarly luxurious, with private patios and fine linens.

Intercontinental Hotel *Festival City, Dubai (971/4/701-1111; intercontinental.com) $270 double.* A modern, conveniently located high-rise hotel with spacious rooms flooded with light. The hotel is home to the French chef Pierre Gagnaire's Reflets restaurant.

Corniche Al Buhaira Hotel *Cornich Road, Sharjah (971/6/556-6666). $130 double.* A comfortable hotel with spacious rooms overlooking a large man-made lake in the center of the city of Sharjah.

WHERE TO EAT

Most hotels in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah will have at least one Ramadan tent; the fancier the hotel, the more luxurious the menu. They are often reserved by large families or corporations, so book a table in advance.

Sharjah Heritage Center *Heritage Area, Sharjah (971/6/568-1738; sharjah.com/v/exhibitions/).* The cooking classes at this modern facility are a great place to sample Emirati foods.

Barbecue Delights *Near Lamcy Square, Oud Metha, Dubai (971/4/335-9868).* A casual spot that serves excellent food, from mutton ribs grilled over charcoal to lamb biryani.

Shababeek *Block B, Al Qasba, Sharjah (971/6/554-0444).* Sheikha Bodour bint Al Qasimi's elegant restaurant, which features contemporary Lebanese dishes, like outstanding *kibbeh nayeh* (Lebanese steak tartare).

MAP: THE M FACTORY

Nightly prayer at Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi.

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Assidat al-Boubar

(Pumpkin Halvah)

Serves 8–10

Like many traditional Emirati desserts, this luscious pumpkin porridge (pictured on page 104) straddles the line between sweet and savory. The dish thickens as it cools, so be sure to serve it while it's still quite warm.

- 2 lb. peeled and seeded kabocha or acorn squash, cubed
- 3½ cups milk
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup almond flour
- 10 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. rose water
- ½ tsp. ground cardamom
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups powdered milk
- 1 cup almonds, roughly chopped
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 2 tbsp. ghee or clarified butter

1 Working in 2 batches, place squash and milk in a blender and puree until smooth; transfer to a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Cook, stirring often, for 15 minutes; reduce heat to medium, and cook, stirring often, until reduced and thickened to the consistency of loose peanut butter, about 1 hour. Add both sugars, almond flour, butter, rose water, cardamom, and salt, and cook, stirring often, until smooth, about 5 minutes more.

2 Remove pot from heat and stir in powdered milk; using a handheld blender or a food processor, puree halvah mixture until no lumps remain. Stir in ¾ cup chopped almonds and 6 tbsp. each raisins and golden raisins. Transfer halvah to a serving platter or bowl and sprinkle remaining almonds and raisins over top; drizzle with ghee and serve immediately.

Balaleet

(Sweet Vermicelli and Eggs)

Serves 8

Served as a breakfast dish and also for dessert, this Indian-influenced sweet pasta (pictured below) is fried and topped with a saffron omelette, making it crunchy, sweet, tender, and savory all at once.

- 8 oz. whole wheat capellini pasta
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ tsp. saffron
- 7 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- ½ tsp. ground cardamom
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. curry powder
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- ½ tsp. ground turmeric
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ tsp. rose water
- 6 eggs, lightly beaten
- Kosher salt, to taste

1 Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add pasta; cook until half-cooked, about 4 minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl; add sugar and toss until dissolved. Set aside. Meanwhile, stir together ¼ tsp. saffron and 2 tbsp. warm water in a small bowl; let sit for 10 minutes.

2 Heat 3 tbsp. butter and the oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat; add cardamom, cinnamon, curry powder, pepper, turmeric, and bay leaves, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add pasta and toss to coat evenly with spiced butter; spread out into an even layer, drizzle evenly with saffron-water mixture and rose water, and cook, without stirring, until toasted, about 15 minutes. Flip and continue cooking until toasted on opposite side, about 15 minutes more. Transfer to a cutting board and tent with foil to keep warm.

3 Return skillet to heat and add remaining butter; add remaining saffron and eggs, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring gently to form an omelette, until just cooked through, about 5 minutes. Cut omelette into wedges and serve over toasted pasta; serve immediately.

Bzar

(Emirati Spice Mix)

Makes about 1¼ cups

This garam masala–like spice is a common Emirati flavoring: It's often blended with clarified butter or simply sprinkled into soups, stews, and other dishes.

- ¼ cup black peppercorns
- ¼ cup cumin seeds
- ¼ cup coriander seeds
- 1 tbsp. cloves
- 1 tbsp. green cardamom pods
- 3 dried chiles de árbol, stemmed
- 2 cinnamon sticks, broken in half
- 1 whole nutmeg, broken into pieces
- 1½ tbsp. ground ginger
- 1 tbsp. ground turmeric

Working with one spice at a time, grind peppercorns, cumin, coriander, cloves, cardamom, chiles, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a spice grinder until finely ground; transfer to a bowl and stir in ginger and turmeric. Store in an air-tight container for up to 1 year.

H'riss

(Spiced Chicken and Wheat Porridge)

Serves 8–10

This deeply satisfying dish of spiced meat and creamy wheat berries (pictured above) is most often made with lamb, but it's particularly delicious when made with chicken.

- 1½ cups wheat berries, soaked in water overnight and drained
- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 6 tbsp. ghee or clarified butter
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into ¼" cubes
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 2" piece ginger, peeled and minced
- 1 cinnamon stick, broken in half
- 1½ tbsp. bzar (Emirati spice mix; see left for the recipe)
- 2 tsp. Aleppo pepper (see page 118)
- 2 green Thai chiles, stemmed and minced
- 1 plum tomato, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- Fried onions, for garnish

1 Bring wheat berries, rice, salt, and 10 cups water to a boil in an 8-qt. saucepan over high heat; reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until wheat berries and rice are very tender and broken down, about 1½ hours.

2 Meanwhile, heat 2 tbsp. ghee in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; season chicken with salt and pepper, add to pot, and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned all over, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, onion, ginger, and cinnamon, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add spice mix, 1 tsp. Aleppo pepper, chiles, and tomato, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add 3 cups water and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken is tender, about 1 hour. Meanwhile, heat remaining ghee and Aleppo pepper in a small saucepan over medium-high heat, and cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 2 minutes; remove from heat and set spiced ghee aside.

3 Working in batches, transfer wheat berries, rice, and any cooking liquid to a blender and puree until






From left: saffron-flavored fritters; Emirati lamb stew; chicken and wheat porridge; and sweet vermicelli and eggs.

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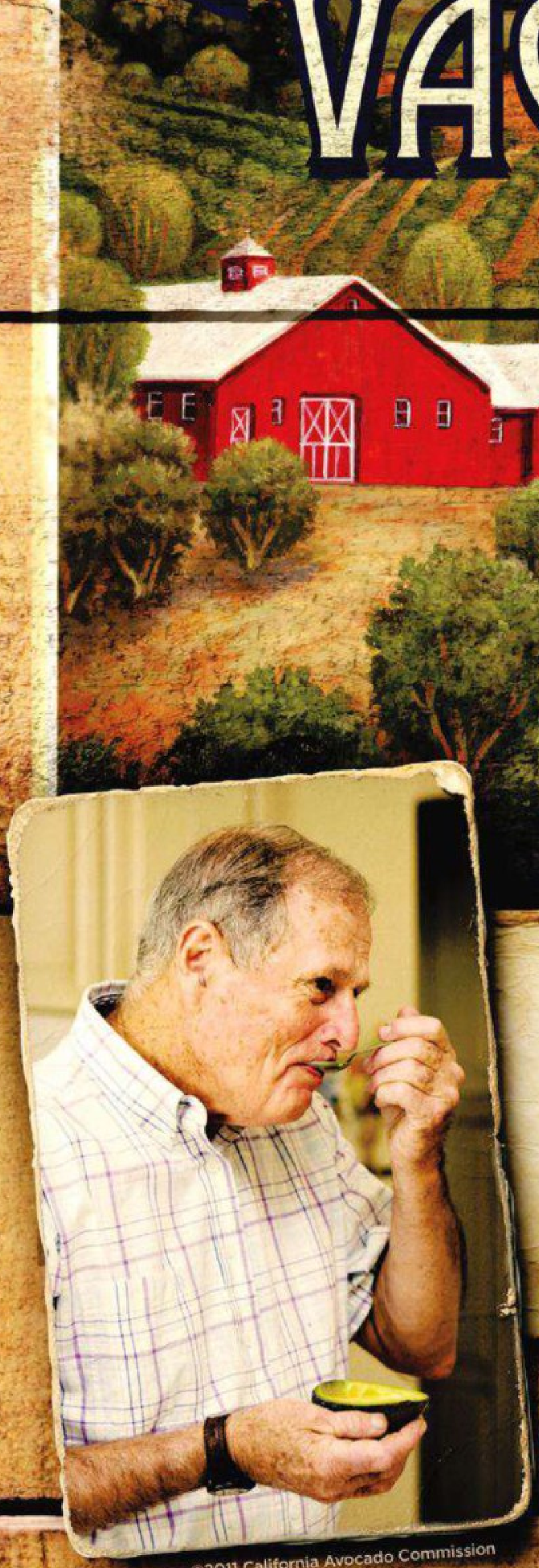
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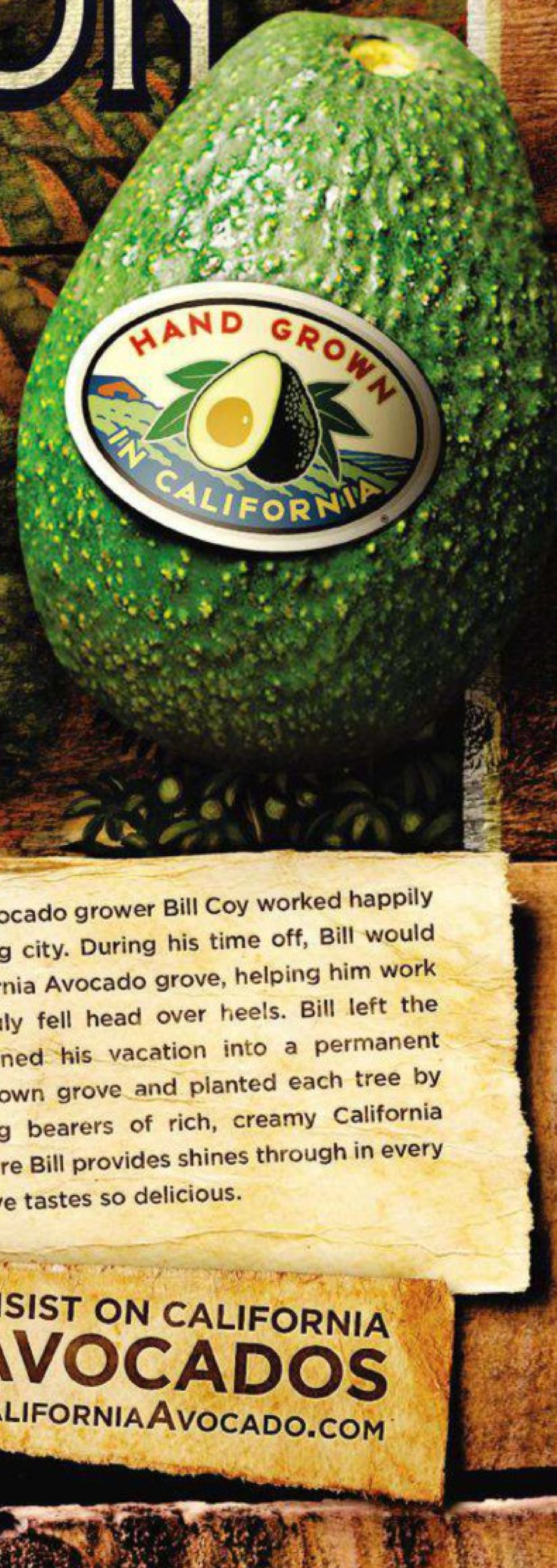
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smooth; return to pan and stir in chicken mixture. Return saucepan to medium heat, and cook, stirring, to meld flavors, about 10 minutes.

4 To serve, ladle stew into serving bowls and top with fried onions; drizzle spiced ghee over top and serve hot.

Lgeimat

(Saffron-Flavored Fritters)

Makes about 2½ dozen

These fluffy fritters (pictured on page 108), soaked in a syrup flavored with saffron, cardamom, and cinnamon, are a favorite Emirati dessert during Ramadan.

FOR THE SYRUP:

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tsp. saffron
- 2 green cardamom pods, crushed
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

FOR THE FRITTERS:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- Canola oil, for frying

1 Make the syrup: Bring sugar, saffron, cardamom, cinnamon, and 1 cup water to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; remove from heat and let sit for 30 minutes. Pour syrup through a fine strainer into a medium bowl and stir in lemon juice; set syrup aside.

2 Make the fritters: In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In a small bowl, whisk together yogurt, egg, and ½ cup water; add to dry ingredients and stir with a fork just until a dough forms; let sit for 10 minutes.

3 Meanwhile, pour oil to a depth of 2" into a 6-qt. Dutch oven, and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 360°. Working in batches and using a ½-oz. ice cream scoop or tablespoon-size measuring spoon, drop balls of dough into oil, and fry, tossing, until golden brown and cooked through, about 3 minutes. Transfer fritters to paper towels to drain briefly, and then transfer to a large shallow serving dish or platter. Pour syrup over the fritters and toss to coat evenly; serve immediately.

Machbuss Rubian

(Shrimp and Rice Pilaf)

Serves 6–8

Influences from all over the Middle East and South Asia converge in this highly seasoned seafood pilaf (pictured on page 103) made with curry and shrimp.

- 2 cups basmati rice
- 5 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ½ cup canola oil
- 15 curry leaves (see page 118)
- 3 whole cloves
- 2 medium yellow onions, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 2 tsp. bzar (Emirati spice mix; see page 108 for the recipe)
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 2" piece ginger, peeled and minced
- 3 dried black limes (see page 118; see also "Sour Power," below), pricked with a knife
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and finely chopped
- 2⅔ cups vegetable stock
- 2 lb. jumbo head-on shrimp, cleaned
- 3 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 3 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro

1 Place rice, 3 tsp. salt, and 3 cups water in a medium bowl; let soak for 1 hour.

2 Heat oven to 375°. Heat oil in a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat; add curry leaves and cloves and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly caramelized, about 20 minutes. Add spice mix, turmeric, garlic, and ginger, and cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add limes and tomatoes, and cook, stirring, until tomatoes begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Drain rice and add to pot along with remaining salt and stock; bring to a boil and then arrange shrimp on top of ingredients in pot. Cover and transfer to oven; bake until rice is tender and shrimp are cooked through, about 25 minutes.

3 Transfer shrimp to a plate and set aside; stir 2 tbsp. each parsley and cilantro into rice. Transfer rice to a large serving platter and arrange shrimp on top; sprinkle with remaining parsley and cilantro.

Tharid

(Emirati Lamb Stew)

Serves 4–6

Often referred to as the Prophet Muhammad's favorite dish, this satisfying lamb and vegetable stew (pictured on page 108) is served over thin, cracker-like bread called *regag* to soak up the rich juices (although we found store-bought, toasted roti to work just as well). To make the preparation easier, have your butcher cut the lamb into pieces.

- ¼ cup canola oil
- 3 lb. bone-in lamb shoulder, trimmed and cut into 3" pieces
- 2 tbsp. bzar (Emirati spice mix; see page 108 for the recipe)
- 5 whole cloves
- 2 chiles de árbol, stemmed
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 4" piece ginger, peeled and minced
- 1 tbsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- ¼ tsp. ground cardamom
- 4 plum tomatoes, quartered lengthwise
- 2 bay leaves
- 15 baby Yukon Gold potatoes
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and halved crosswise
- 2 small zucchini, halved crosswise
- 2 large Italian frying peppers, quartered lengthwise
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 4 12" pieces roti flatbread, toasted (see page 118)

1 Heat oil in an 8-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season lamb all over with spice mix; working in batches, add lamb to pot and cook, turning as needed, until browned on all sides, about 6 minutes. Transfer lamb to a plate and set aside. Add cloves, chiles, and onion to pot, and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is soft and begin to caramelize, about 10 minutes. Add garlic and ginger, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add cumin, pepper, cardamom, tomatoes, and bay leaves, and cook, stirring, until tomatoes are soft, about 2 minutes. Return lamb to pot, along with any drippings that accumulated on the plate. Add the potatoes, carrots, zucchini, peppers, and 12 cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, partially covered, until lamb is tender, about 1½ hours; season with salt and pepper.

2 Line a large, deep serving dish with roti flat bread, and using a slotted spoon, arrange meat and vegetables over flatbread in dish. Pour liquid into a large serving bowl and serve on the side.

Sour Power



With a flavor at once sour and musky, dried limes are an essential ingredient in the Persian Gulf countries, as well as in northern India. The walnut-size, lightweight limes are made from harvested fruits that have been boiled in brine and then sun-dried until the seeds and pulp shake loosely within dry, leathery skin. Throughout the Gulf region, they are referred to as *limoo amani,* or Omani limes, for their country of origin, where they are simply called *limoo.* Dried limes are used exclusively as a seasoning, and can be added whole to stews or sauces to impart a tart, pungent dimension; a few pricks with a knife allow the cooking liquid to permeate the fruit, hydrating it and releasing its complex flavors. In the shrimp and rice pilaf (see recipe, above), for example, dried limes enhance the fragrance of curry leaves, turmeric, and other aromatics, while adding earthy and acidic notes. Depending on their drying time, the limes' colors range from parchment brown to charcoal (hence their alternative name, black limes)—though they're often discarded before serving, paler dried limes are used for lighter-colored dishes, and black limes for darker stews. Dried limes are also broken open, seeded, and ground to be sold as a powder, which is delicious sprinkled on seafood or lentils, or used as a rub on all sorts of meats. Though grinding releases volatile oils and thus limits shelf life, stored whole, dried limes can last for two years. You can also make your own by blanching fresh limes in salted water and drying them on a rack in the sun or in an airy pantry for at least a week. *—Gabriella Gershenson*

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1

Ice Cream Unplugged

When Columbus, Ohio-based ice cream maven Jeni Britton Bauer visited the SAVEUR kitchen recently to share a few tricks of her trade (see "Here's the Scoop," page 37), it triggered a rush of sweet memories, and a few questions, too. We have an automatic ice cream maker, but what about all of those readers who don't? Would the same principles that Bauer adheres to in producing her Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams yield delicious ice creams even without the motorized churning action of an electric ice cream maker? The answer is a resounding yes. Below, a few of our favorite alternative ice cream–making apparatuses, ranging from low- to even lower-tech. —*Ben Mims*



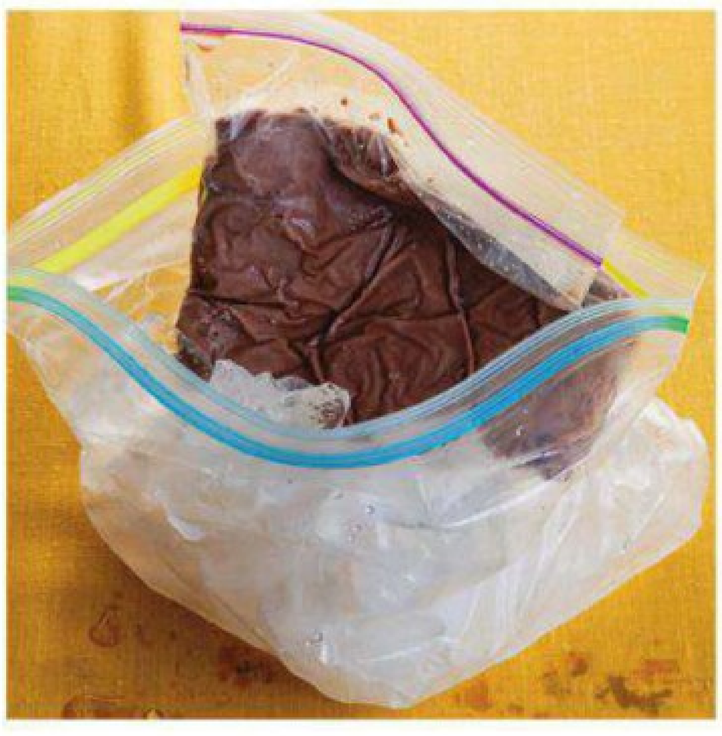
It doesn't get more basic than a **coffee can** filled with an ice cream base that's placed inside a larger can filled with ice and rock salt. Close both cans with plastic lids, shake for 25 minutes and, voilà, ice cream.



The **Play & Freeze** ice cream ball contains a metal tube that you fill with an ice cream base. Ice and rock salt fill the sides of the ball itself, which you toss, roll, or otherwise agitate for about 20 minutes.



With the **Cuisipro Donvier** ice cream maker, you just pour the ice cream base into the already-chilled metal container and then turn the crank every couple of minutes until a thick ice cream forms.



A **plastic Ziploc bag** inside a larger bag filled with ice and rock salt applies the standard equation—freezing temperature plus agitation for 5 minutes—and wins the prize for the most elegantly simple solution of all.



If you have a **hand mixer**, you can fill a bowl with the ice cream base, place it in the freezer, and mix on medium speed every 2 hours to break up any ice crystals that may have formed, to create a chunky ice cream.



Another option is to freeze an ice cream base in ice cube trays and then pop the frozen cubes in a **food processor**. Pulse for a few seconds, and you have instant, if slightly rustic, ice cream.

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FOUR FINE SCOOPS

Use this base as the starting point for any ice cream, including the four listed below (and pictured above), our favorites from *Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams at Home* (Artisan, 2011).

Jeni's Ice Cream Base

Makes about 1 quart

- 2 cups milk
- 4 tsp. cornstarch
- 1¼ cups heavy cream
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 2 tbsp. light corn syrup
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 tbsp. cream cheese, softened

In a bowl, stir together ¼ cup milk and the cornstarch; set slurry aside. In a 4-qt. saucepan, whisk together remaining milk and the cream, sugar, syrup, and salt; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook for 4 minutes; stir in slurry. Return to a boil and cook, stirring, until thickened, about 2 minutes. Place cream cheese in a bowl and pour in ¼ cup hot milk mixture; whisk until smooth. Then whisk in remaining milk mixture. Pour mixture into a plastic bag; seal, and submerge in a bowl of ice water until chilled. Pour mixture into an ice cream maker; process according to manufacturer's instructions. Transfer ice cream to a storage container and freeze until set.

Variations:

① To make ***Sweet Corn and Black Raspberry Ice Cream:*** Add cut kernels and cob of 1 ear of corn to base before boiling. Pour base through a fine strainer after cooking. Combine 1 cup black raspberries or blackberries and ½ cup sugar in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat, and cook, stirring, until thick; strain and chill. After churning, alternate layers of ice cream and berry sauce in a storage container before freezing.

② To make ***Blackstrap Praline Ice Cream:*** Reduce sugar in base to ½ cup and substitute ¼ cup blackstrap molasses for the corn syrup. Combine 1 cup pecans, 2 tbsp. each light brown sugar and blackstrap molasses, 1 tbsp. melted unsalted butter, ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon, and ¼ tsp. kosher salt on a foil-lined baking sheet and bake until bubbly and dark, about 12 minutes. Cool, roughly chop, and fold into churned ice cream before freezing.

③ To make ***The Darkest Chocolate Ice Cream in the World:*** Reduce heavy cream in base to 1 cup and sugar to ½ cup. Bring ½ cup each unsweetened cocoa, brewed coffee, and sugar to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan over high heat; cook for 30 seconds. Remove from heat and stir in 1½ oz. bittersweet chocolate. Stir sauce into base before chilling.

④ To make ***Beet Ice Cream with Mascarpone, Orange Zest, and Poppy Seeds:*** Use ½ tsp. salt, substitute ¼ cup mascarpone cheese for the cream cheese, and add the peel of 1 orange to base while boiling. Before chilling, remove peel; stir in ½ cup puréed roasted beets and 2 tbsp. poppy seeds.

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Smooth Move

THE TECHNIQUE KNOWN as velveting adds a few steps to the chicken stir-fry with chanterelles on page 64, but it's basically an insurance policy for succulent results. Frequently used in professional Chinese kitchens, velveting begins with tossing bite-size pieces of meat, poultry, or seafood in a mixture of egg white, cornstarch, and a little water or (in this case) sherry, and allowing it all to marinate briefly. Cutting the meat down to bite-size pieces increases surface area and allows the starch and protein in the marinade to penetrate efficiently. When the meat is then blanched quickly in hot oil, that starch–protein seal traps moisture inside the meat, keeping it juicy and tender as it cooks. Once blanched, the meat reveals nothing of its marinade, no eggy or starchy flavor whatsoever. You may notice that the dish's sauce adheres slightly better to the meat than it otherwise would, but beyond that, the only evidence of velveting is the delicate, moist, and luxuriously smooth texture it produces. —*Andy Baraghani*

The Sweet Stuff Just as certain cocktails call for a particular style of rum, there are times—when making the Petit Punch Vieux on page 53, for one—when you simply must have *sirop de canne*. That's French for cane syrup; it's a richer alternative to simple syrup made by many of the same distilleries in the French-speaking Caribbean that make *rhum agricole*. Both products are made from fresh sugarcane juice; in the case of *sirop de canne*, it's a matter of slowly reducing the sweet liquid until it thickens and takes on a deep golden hue. Some distillers embellish their *sirops* with spices and other flavorings; vanilla, a popular addition, makes a delicious complement to a floral or woody rum. Not every liquor store carries the stuff, however, and if you find yourself shaker in hand and without the time to mail order, you can make a respectable approximation in your own kitchen. Here's how: Heat 1½ cups Demerara sugar, 3 whole cloves, 3 whole allspice berries, 1 cinnamon stick, 1 vanilla bean with its seeds scraped and reserved, and 1 cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and cool. Your homemade *sirop de canne* will keep in the refrigerator for up to a month and make quite a few tasty tropical drinks. —*Kellie Evans*



TODD COLEMAN (2)

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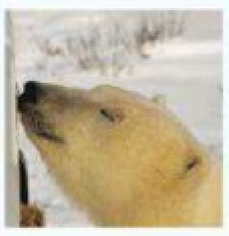
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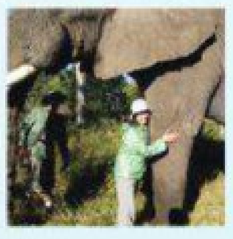
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A Guide to Resources

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BY BEN MIMS

Fare

While in Binghamton, New York, sample spiedies at **Sharkey's Restaurant** (56 Glenwood Avenue; 607/729-9201). To purchase **Whidbey Island lavender**, contact Lavender Wind Farm (877/242-7716; lavenderwind.com). To buy **loquats**, contact Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; melissas.com). When visiting the Chicago area, stop by the Oak Park Farmers' Market, open Saturdays from late May through October, to try the doughnuts made by **Pilgrim Congregational Church** (460 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois; 708/358-5780; farmersmarket@oakpark.us). To purchase the **Kristine Ashe "Entre Nous" Sauvignon Blanc 2008** ($34), contact Kristine Ashe Vineyards (707/982-8000; kristineashevineyards.com). When in Beirut, sample Lebanese home cooking at **Tawlet** restaurant (Sector 79, Naher Street, #12, Jisr el Hadid, Chalhoub Building #22, 961/1/44-8129; tawlet.com).

Routes

To make the carne adobada and green chile cheeseburger recipes (see page 34), purchase **New Mexico chile powder**, available from Great American Spice Company ($3.76 for a 4-ounce container; 877/677-4239; americanspice.com).

Kitchenwise

To prepare the salmon in bengali mustard sauce recipe (see page 42), purchase **brown mustard seeds**, available from Starwest Botanicals ($5.67 for a 1-pound bag; 800/800-4372; starwest-botanicals.com).

Essay

To make the burnt chipotle salsa recipe (see page 46), purchase **agave syrup**, available from iHerb.com ($4.69 for a 17-ounce bottle; look for agave "nectar"; 866/328-1171; iherb.com).

Drink

To make the mai tai recipe (see page 53), use **orgeat syrup**, available from Keg Works ($6.49 for a 12.7-ounce bottle; 877/636-3673; kegworks.com). To prepare the naked ape recipe (see page 53), buy **cinnamon syrup**, available from Amazon.com ($7.60 for a 750-milliliter bottle; amazon.com). You'll also need cinnamon syrup to make the zombie recipe (see page 53), which also uses **falernum**, available from BevMo! ($20.99 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 925/609-6000; bevmo.com). To make the petit punch vieux recipe (see page 53), use **cane syrup**, available from Keg Works ($11.95 for a 500-milliliter bottle; see above).

Yunnan

To prepare the wood ear mushroom salad with edamame recipe (see page 66), use **dried wood ear mushrooms**, available from iGourmet ($10.99 for a 4-ounce bag; 877/446-8763; igourmet.com). To make the mushroom noodle soup recipe (see page 66), purchase **Chinese egg noodles**, available from Food Service Direct ($26.65 for twelve 8-ounce bags; 757/644-4465; foodservicedirect.com).

Pesto

To purchase the different **basil varieties** in our glossary, contact Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; melissas.com). To order different varieties of **Genovese basil seeds**, contact Seeds from Italy (781/721-5904; growitalian.com) or Burpee (800/888-1447; burpee.com); ask for piccolo verde or basilico Genovese seeds. To prepare the pesto rosso recipe (see page 92), use **Aleppo pepper**, available from The Spice House ($4.99 for a 2-ounce jar; see above). To prepare the crispy calamari with pesto mayo recipe (see page 96), purchase **chickpea flour**, available from Vitacost.com (look for "garbanzo bean flour"; $2.65 for a 22-ounce bag; 800/381-0759; vitacost.com); **Aleppo pepper**, available from The Spice House ($4.99 for a 2-ounce jar; 847/328-3711; the spicehouse.com); and **ground lime powder**, available from Kalustyan's ($6.99 for a 3-ounce bag; look for "lemon omani"; 800/352-3451; kalustyans.com). To make the pesto focaccia recipe (see page 96), buy **durum wheat flour**, available from Bonanza ($2 for a 1-pound bag; bonanza.com). To make the trenette with pesto, green beans, and potatoes recipe (see page 97), buy **trenette pasta**, available from Amazon.com ($15.99 for three 1.1-pound boxes; amazon.com).

San Joaquin Valley

For more information on planning your trip to the San Joaquin Valley, please contact the following tourism boards: **Sacramento** (800/292-2334; discovergold.org), **Modesto** (888/640-8467; visitmodesto.com), **Fresno and Clovis** (800/788-0836; playfresno.org), **Tulare** (559/733-6291; co.tulare.ca.us), and **Bakersfield** (866/425-7353; visitbakersfield.com). When flying in and out of Los Angeles en route to or returning from the Central Valley, stay at the Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, 300 South Doheny Drive, (310/273-2222; fourseasons.com/losangeles).

Ramadan

To prepare the Emirati lamb stew recipe (see page 110), buy **roti flatbread**, available from Kalustyans ($6.99 for a 5-piece bag; look for "rumali roti"; see above). To make the spiced chicken and wheat porridge recipe (see page 108), use **Aleppo pepper**, available from The Spice House (see above). To prepare the shrimp and rice pilaf recipe (see page 110), purchase **curry leaves**, available from The Big Indian Store ($8.99 for a 25-gram bag; 415/651-6779; spicesonline.info) and **dried black limes**, available from Kalustyans ($7.99 for a 4-ounce pack; see above). To make the sweet vermicelli and eggs recipe (see page 108), buy **whole wheat capellini pasta**, available from NetGrocer.com ($2.55 for a 16-ounce package; 888/638-4762; netgrocer.com).

Kitchen

To make ice cream at home without an electric ice cream machine, purchase a **Play & Freeze Ice Cream Maker**, available from target.com ($24.99–$34.99, depending on size; target.com) or a **Cuisipro Donvier 1-qt. Premier Ice Cream Maker**, available from Cookery Gadgets ($55.15; cookerygadgets.com). To make the blackstrap praline ice cream variation of Jeni's ice cream base recipe (see page 113), purchase **blackstrap molasses**, available from The Natural Online ($7.79 for 32-ounce bottle; 800/921-4271; the naturalonline.com).

Corrections

Vodopivec, producers of the **Vodopivec Vitovska Ampora 2006** featured in the "One Good Bottle" column from Issue 139, June/July 2011, is a winery, not a vineyard, as stated in the article.

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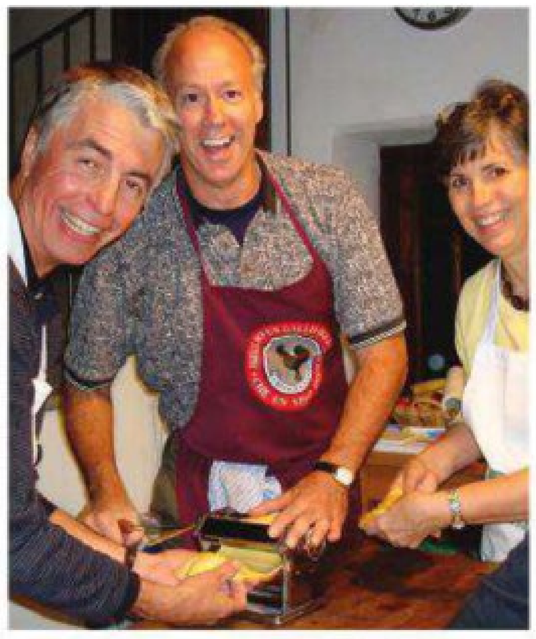
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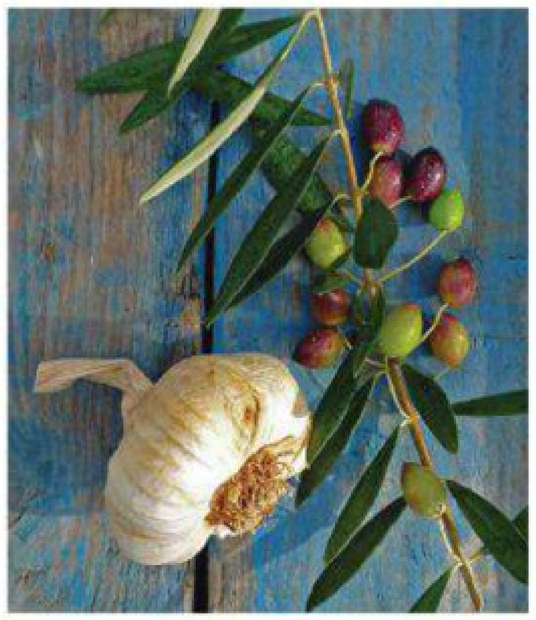
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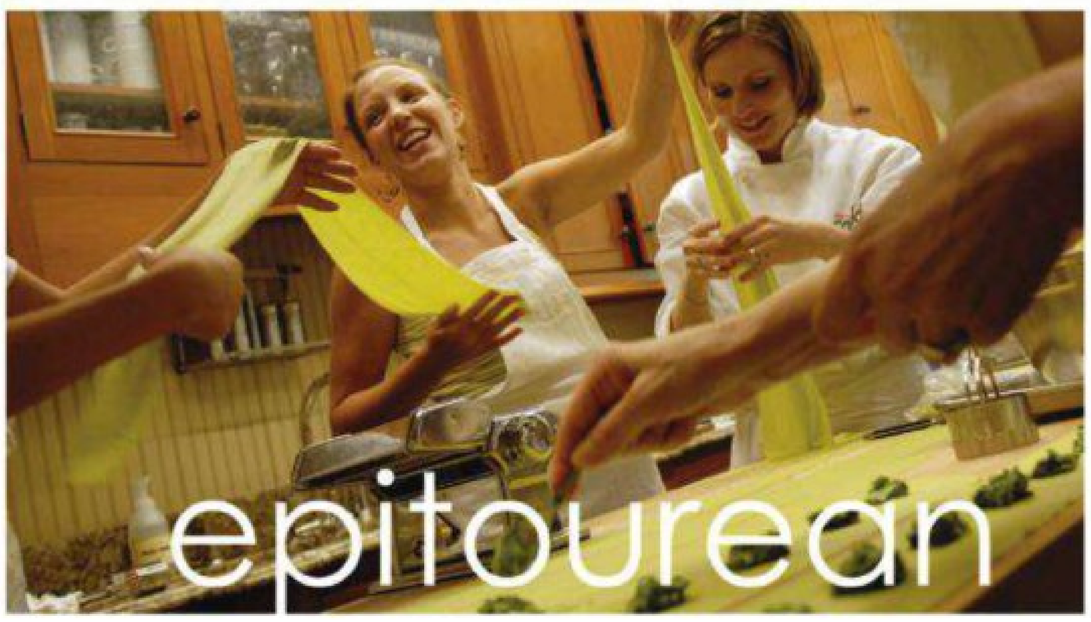


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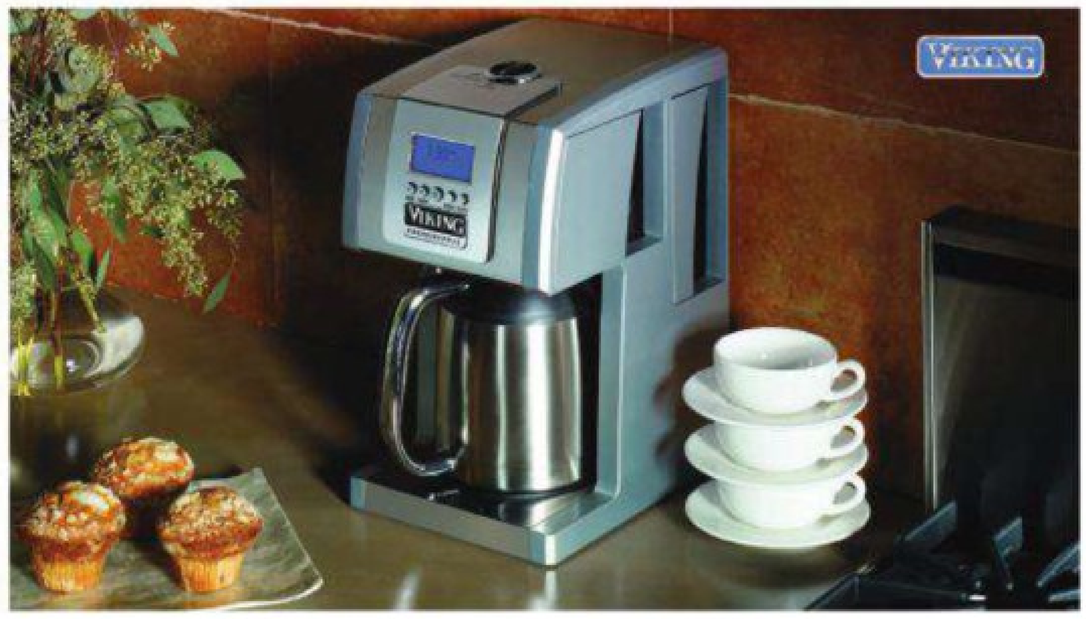


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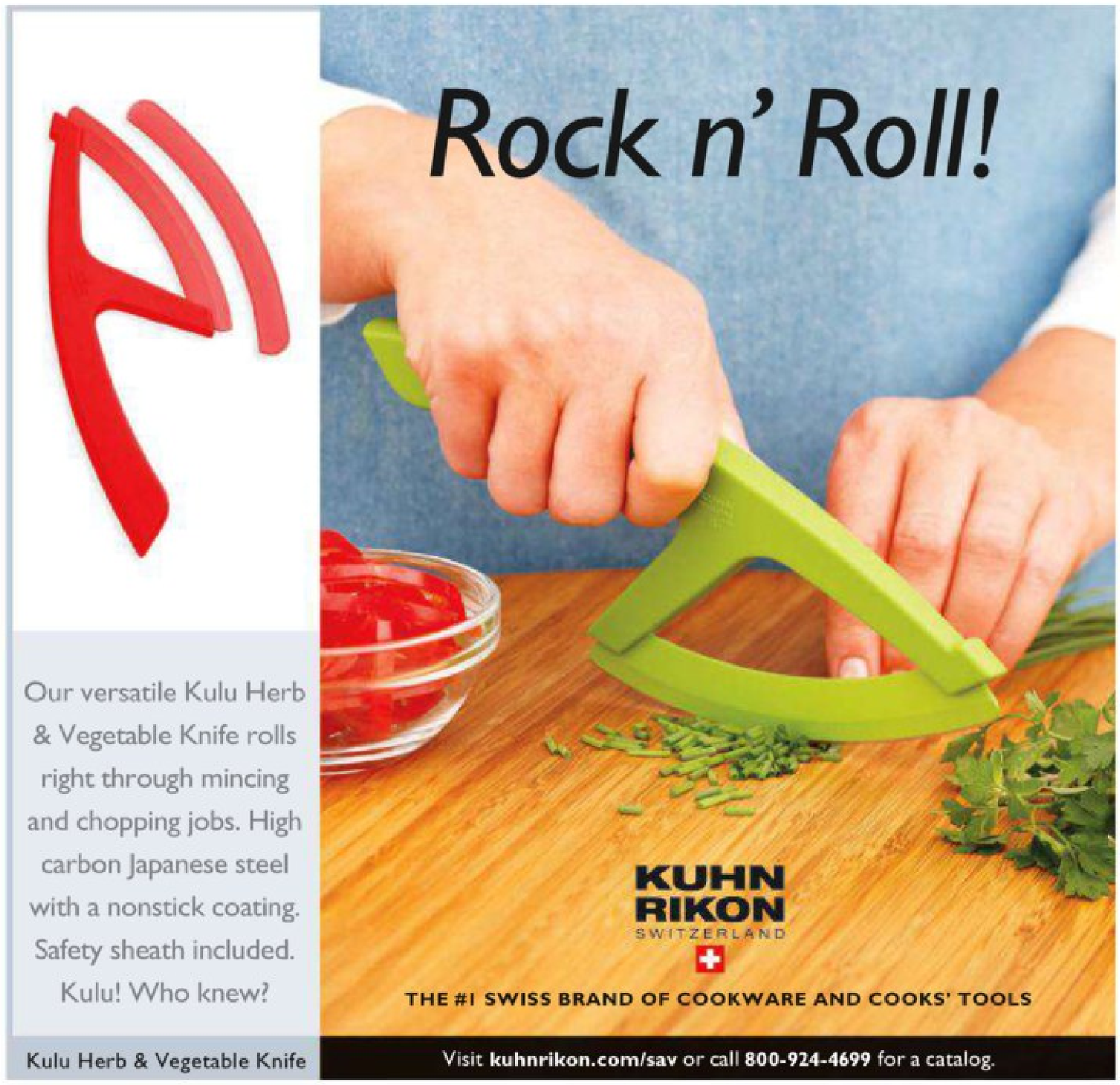
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MOMENT



TIME 6:58 P.M., August 29, 2010

PLACE Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Commerce stops in Abu Dhabi as a pair of produce vendors break their daily Ramadan fast with a meal of biryani, fried fish, and dates.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON LOWE

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